

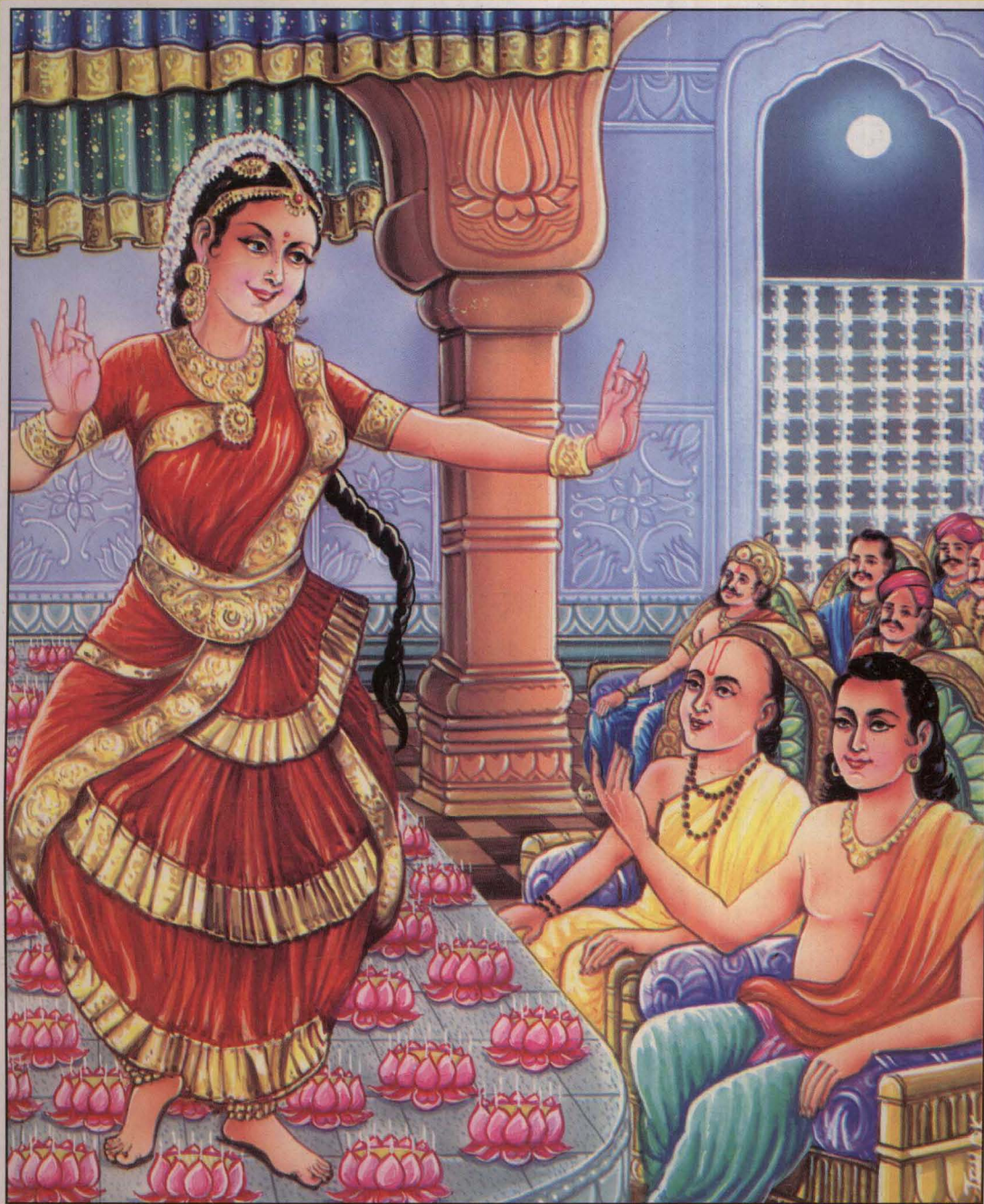


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ARYA STHULABHADRA



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Part-1

Arya Sthulabhadra, the eighth head of the order in Bhagavan Mahavir's lineage, was famous as a great yogi. He was the last Srutakevali (having knowledge of all Angas or the sermon of Bhagavan Mahavir) and Dash-Purvadhar (having knowledge of only ten Purvas or the subtle Jain canons).

According to Jain history, after the death of Udayi, the son of Ajatashatru, the Nand dynasty ascended the throne of Magadha. Nand dynasty appointed a scholarly Brahmin Kalpaka as the prime-minister. During the reign of Ghananand, the ninth ruler of this clan, the prime-minister was Shakadal, also ninth in the lineage of Kalpakas. Shakadal was a great scholar, shrewd politician, educationist, and an astute economist.

Arya Sthulabhadra was born in the house of Shakadal in the year 411 B. C. He had one brother named Shriyak and seven sisters.

Sthulabhadra was a valourous and highly talented brave warrior. Besides being an Adonis he was an archer of high caliber and a great Vina (Sitar-like instrument) player. In spite of his youth, beauty, wealth, grandeur, accomplishments, and state honours he was a highly detached person. He once happened to attend the dance performance of Rupakosha, the famous courtesan. The proficiency in arts, divine beauty, and absolute devotion of Rupakosha ensnared even a detached person like Sthulabhadra in the trap of love. For twelve long years he remained away from home in the mansion of Rupakosha. He returned home only when the shocking news of his father's demise awakened him to his family duties.

Rupakosha was a top ranking dancer with state honours. Besides being a great artist she was also an astute and prudent woman. It is said that with rewards from king Nand she built a unique studio. Bewitching paintings on themes like dance, music, and erotica were displayed there. After his ascetic-initiation, Arya Sthulabhadra spent his first monsoon-stay in this studio. (the story is included in the second part of this two part comic)

This picture story has been written by Acharya Shrimad Vijaya Nityanand Surishvar who is an accomplished author of biographies of illustrious persons from Jain history. We express our gratitude to him.

—Shrichand Surana 'Saras'

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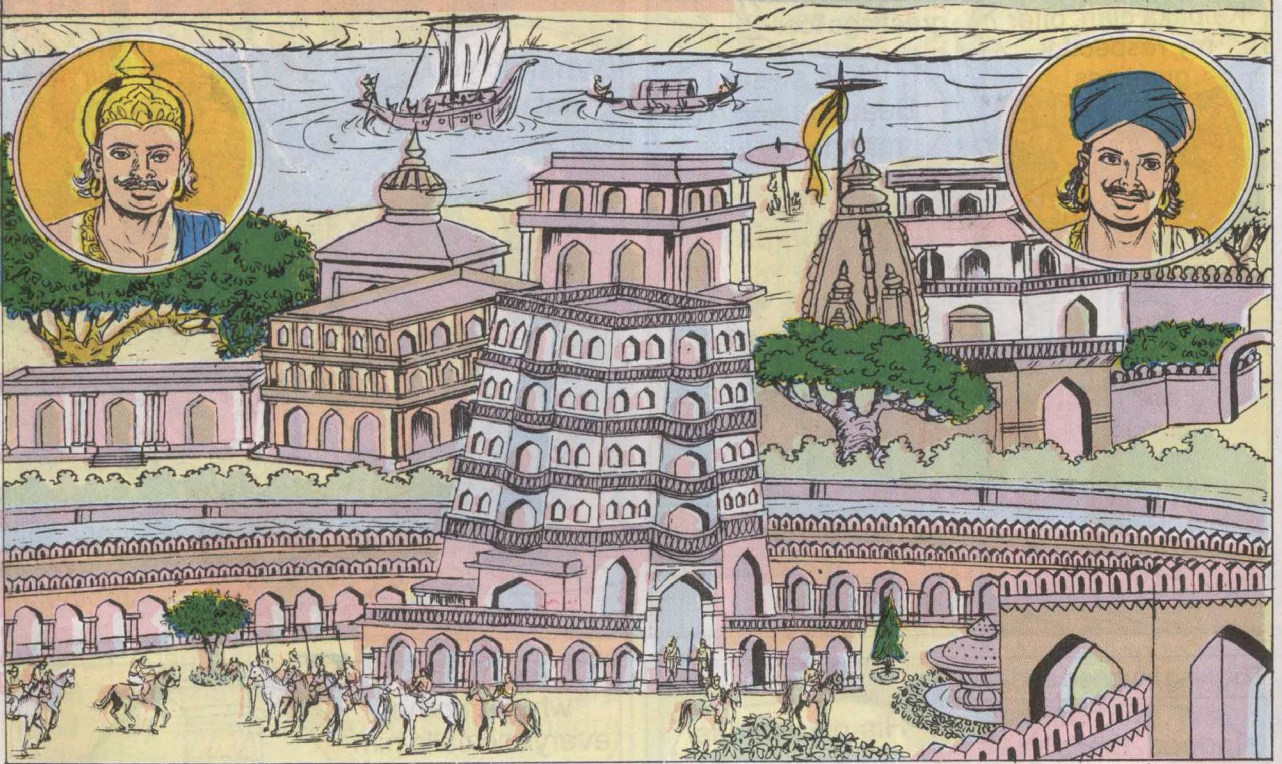
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ARYA STHULABHADRA

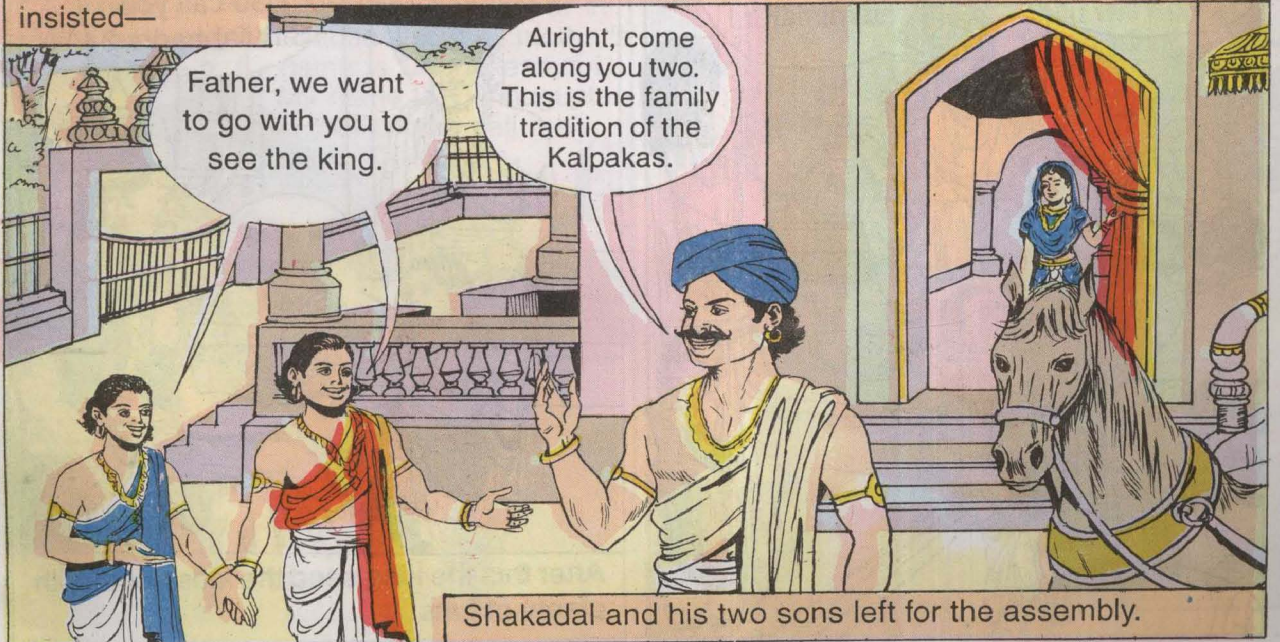
Pataliputra, the beautiful capital of Magadha on the banks of the Ganges, had huge palaces, large mansions, and many grand Jain and Shiva temples. Ghananand the ninth king of the Nand dynasty ruled there. Shakadal was the prime-minister.



One day when minister Shakadal was ready to go to the assembly his two sons insisted—

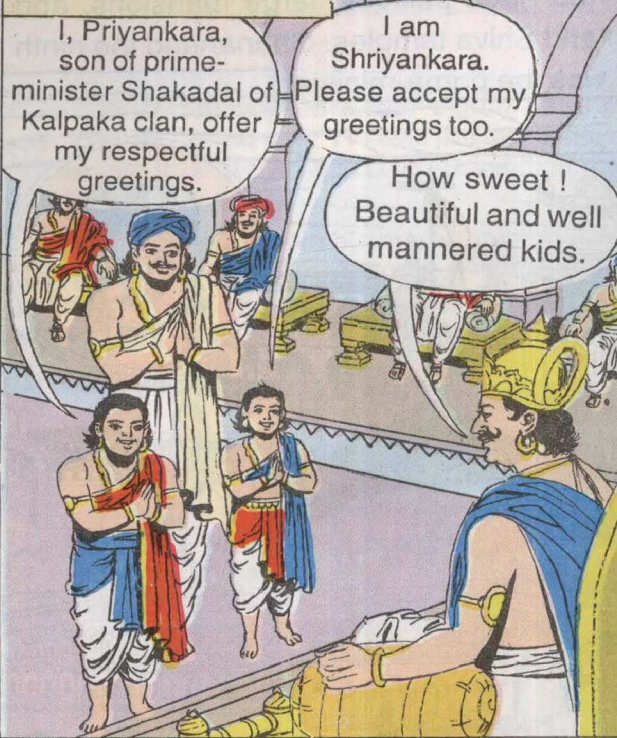
Father, we want to go with you to see the king.

Alright, come along you two. This is the family tradition of the Kalpakas.



Shakadal and his two sons left for the assembly.

In the assembly, Shakadal greeted the king. His two sons followed his suit—



The king asked Priyankara to come near and brushed his hair. Looking at his sweet chubby body the king teased—

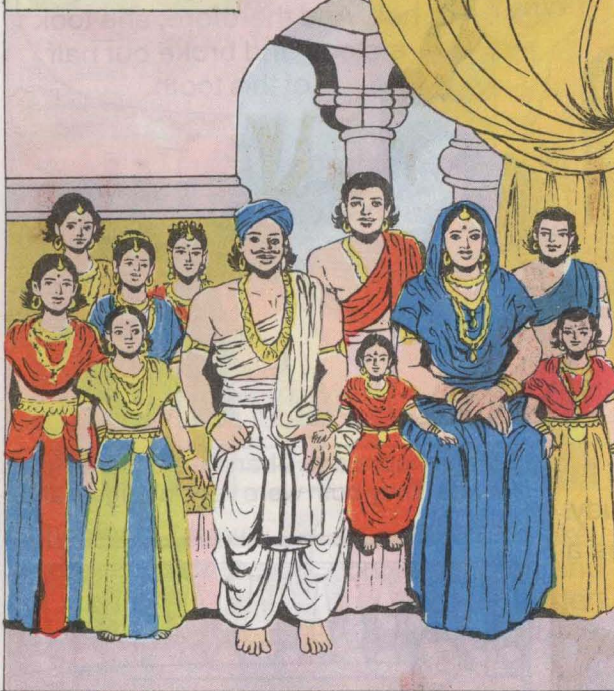


The king laughed and said—



After this the king send the kids home with plenty of gifts.

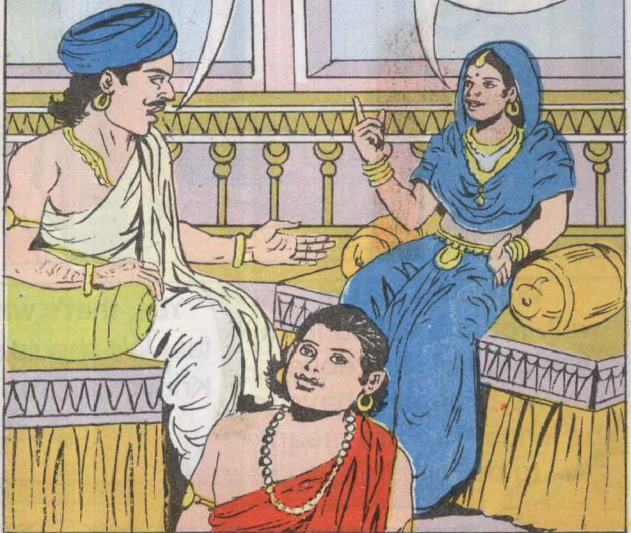
After Shriyankara came seven daughters to Shakadal and his wife Lakshmidēvi. Their names were—Yaksha, Yakshadinna, Bhuta, Bhutadinna, Sena, Vena, and Rena.



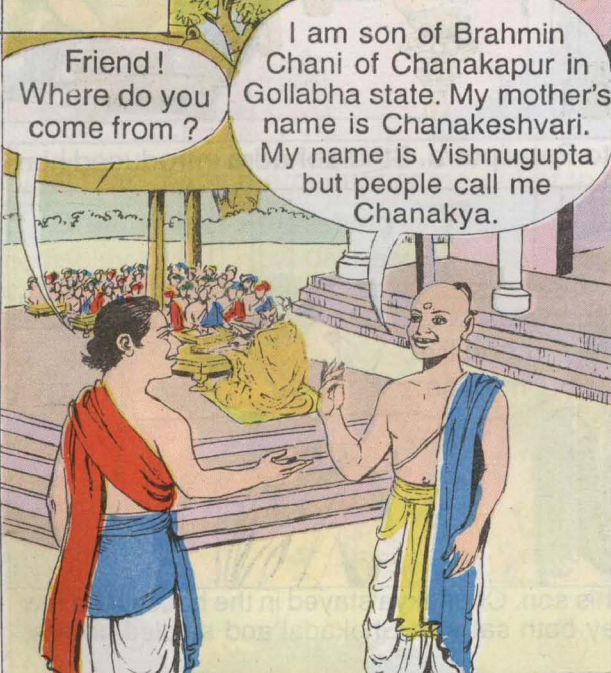
When Sthulabhadra was eight years, Shakadal told his wife—

We should send Sthulabhadra to the gurukul (residential school) of Takshashila for his education. Many princes study there.

Yes, my Lord, a prodigal child like him should get a teacher like Brihaspati, the guru of gods.

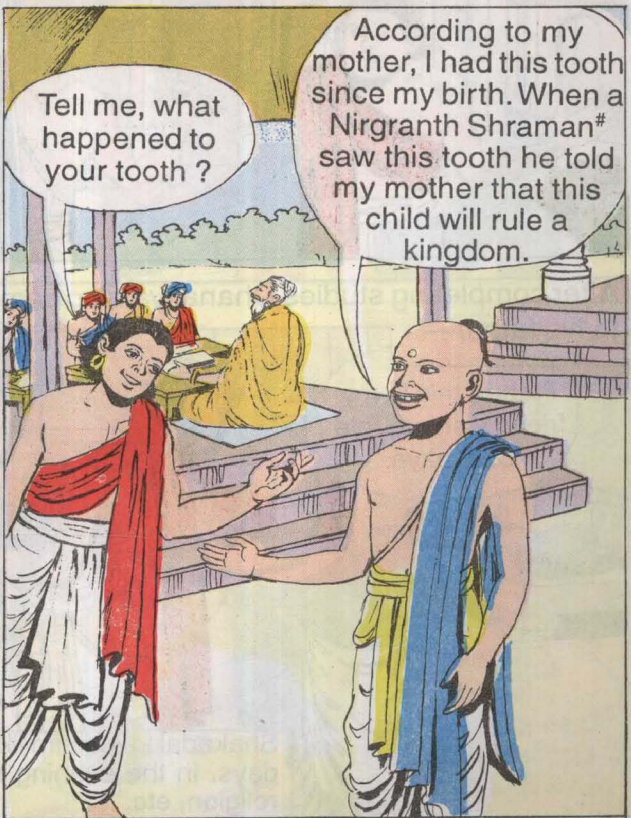


On an auspicious day Sthulabhadra was sent to Takshashila. There he met a sharp and witty Brahmin youth. Sthulabhadra asked him—



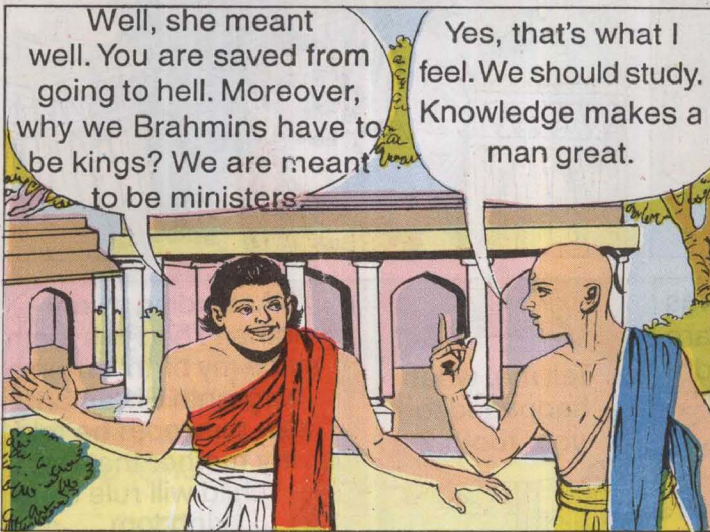
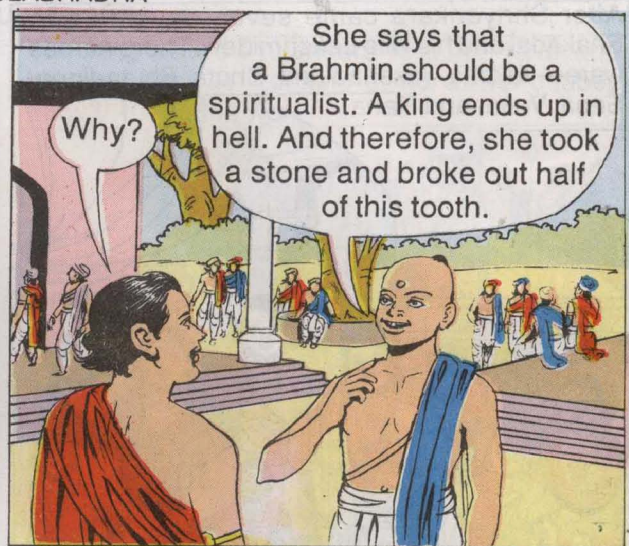
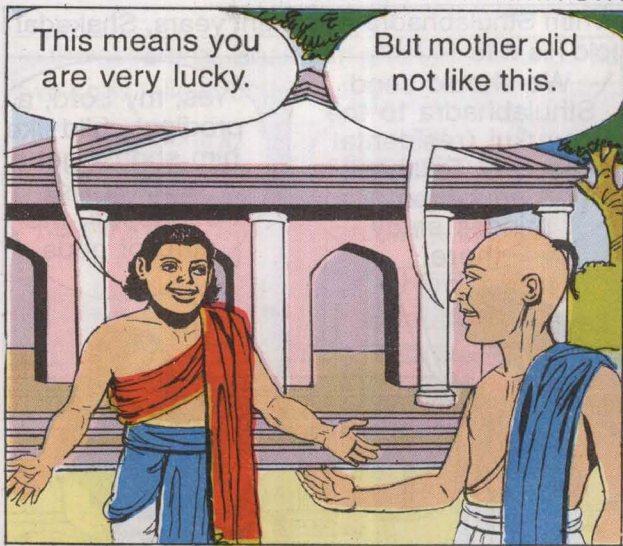
Friend! Where do you come from?

I am son of Brahmin Chani of Chanakapur in Gollabha state. My mother's name is Chanakeshvari. My name is Vishnugupta but people call me Chanakya.

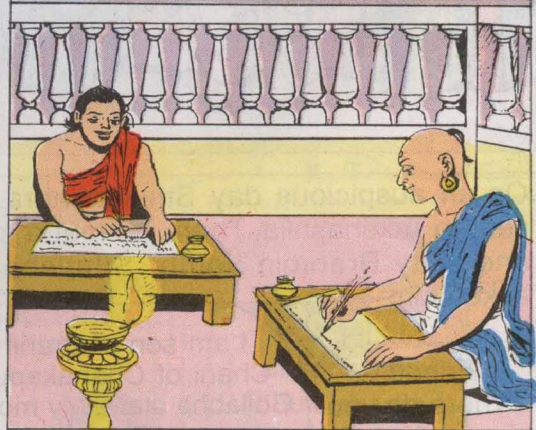


Tell me, what happened to your tooth?

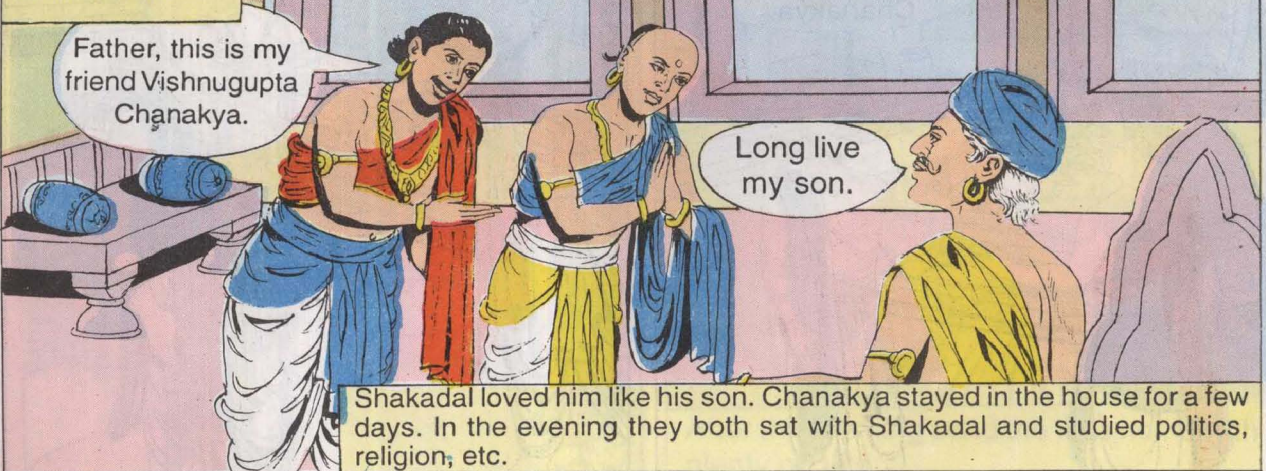
According to my mother, I had this tooth since my birth. When a Nirgranth Shraman[#] saw this tooth he told my mother that this child will rule a kingdom.



Sthulabhadra and Chanakya became fast friends. They both were very intelligent and talented.

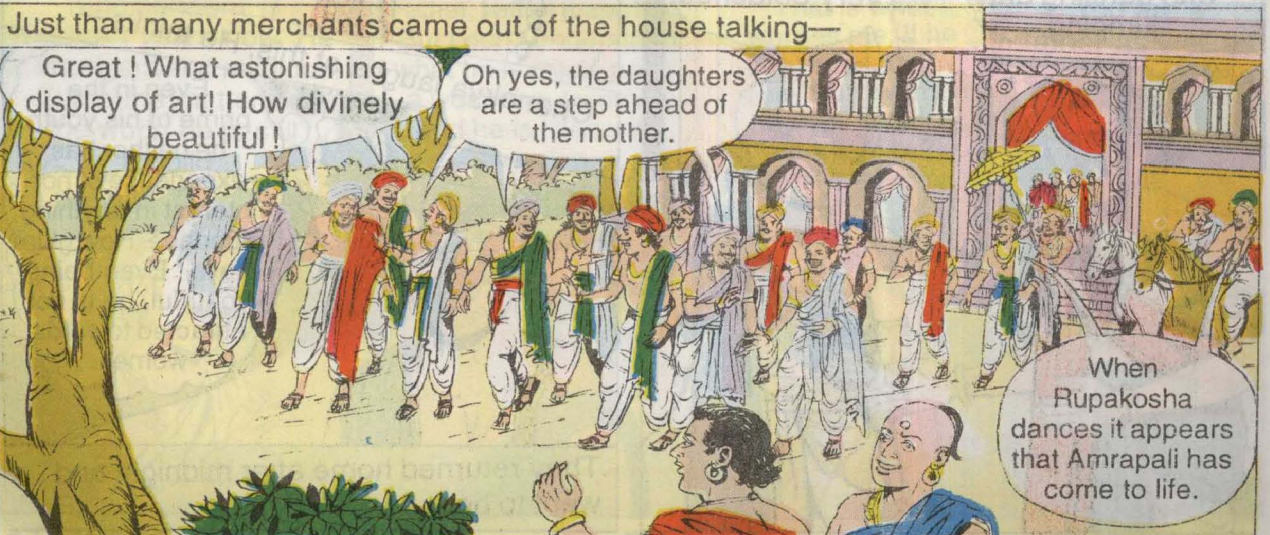
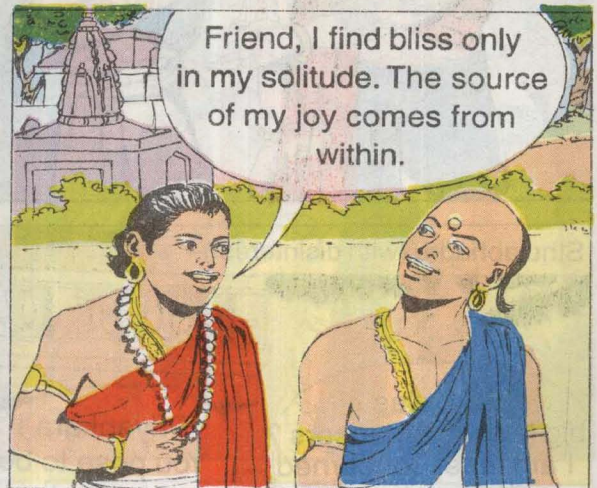
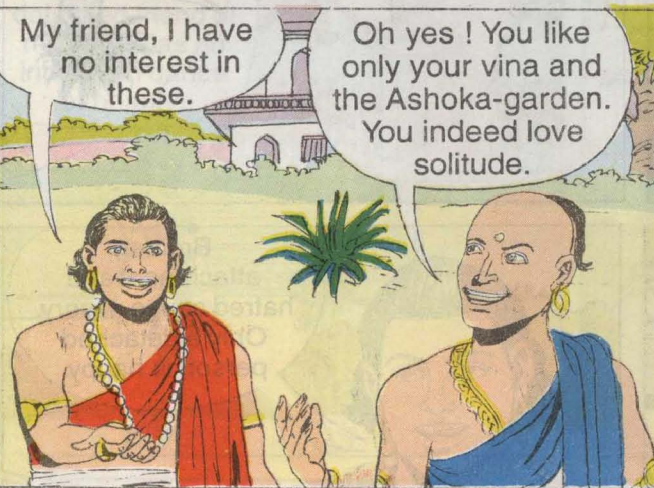
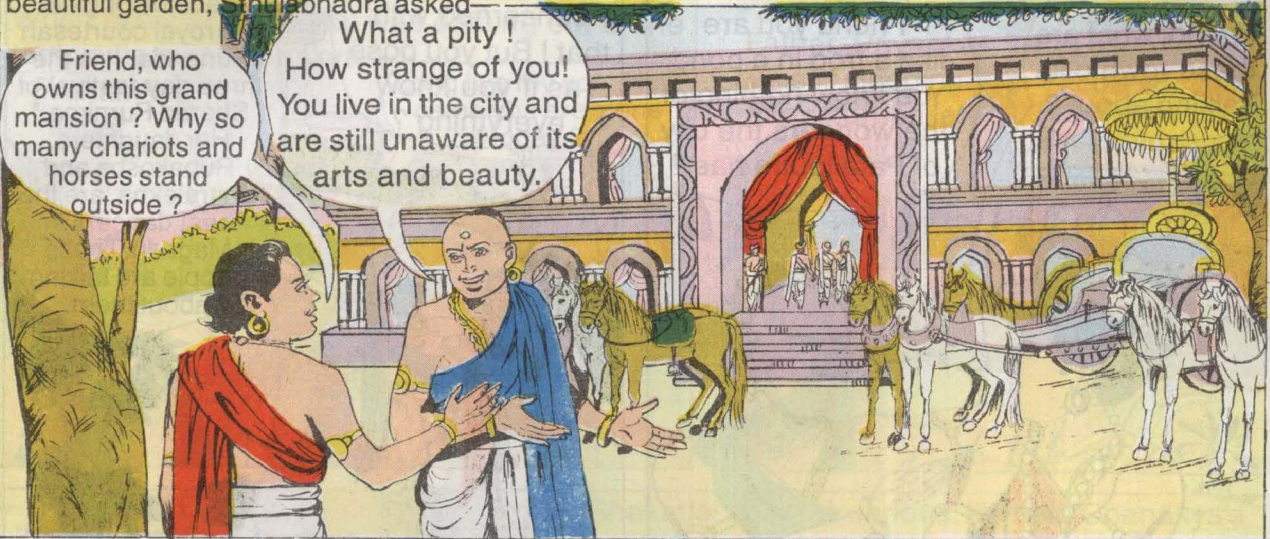


After completing studies Chanakya also came to Pataliputra. Sthulabhadra introduced him to his father—



Shakadal loved him like his son. Chanakya stayed in the house for a few days. In the evening they both sat with Shakadal and studied politics, religion, etc.

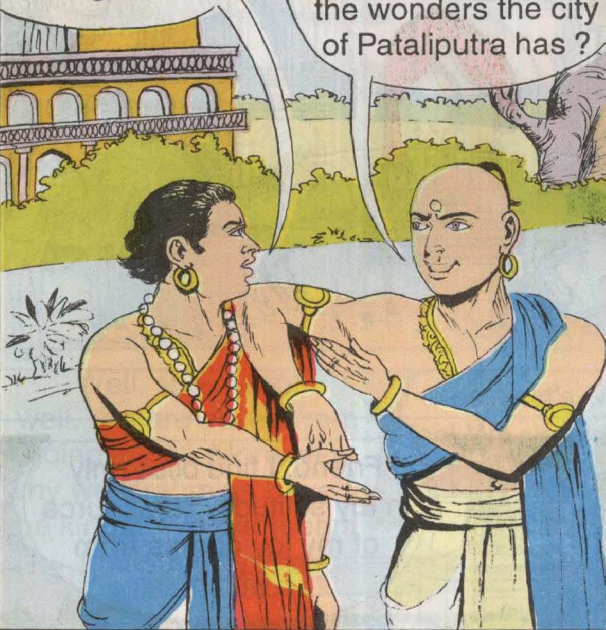
One moonlit night the two friends were roaming around the city. Seeing a grand mansion within a beautiful garden, Sthulabhadra asked—



Sthulabhadra looks dumbly—

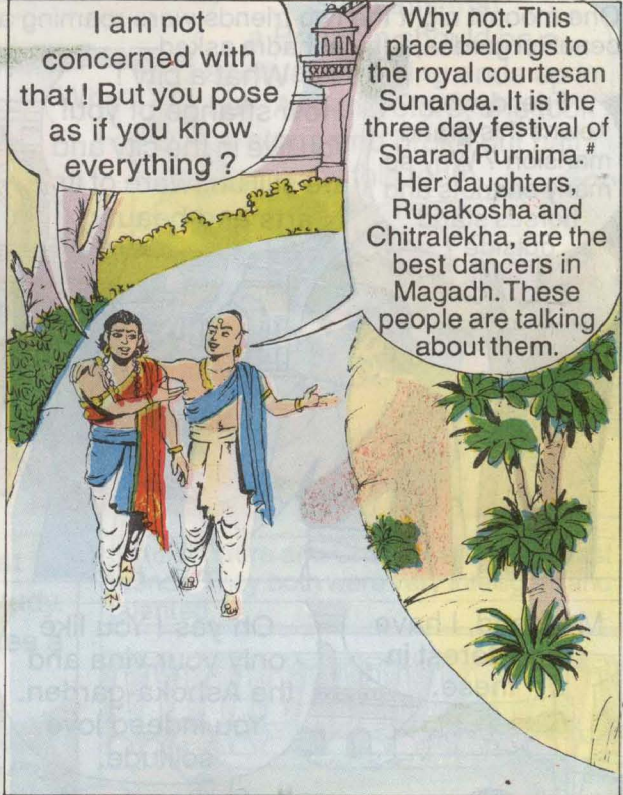
Friend, what are these townfolks talking about ?

Friend you are like a frog in a pond. You know nothing of the wonders the city of Pataliputra has ?



I am not concerned with that ! But you pose as if you know everything ?

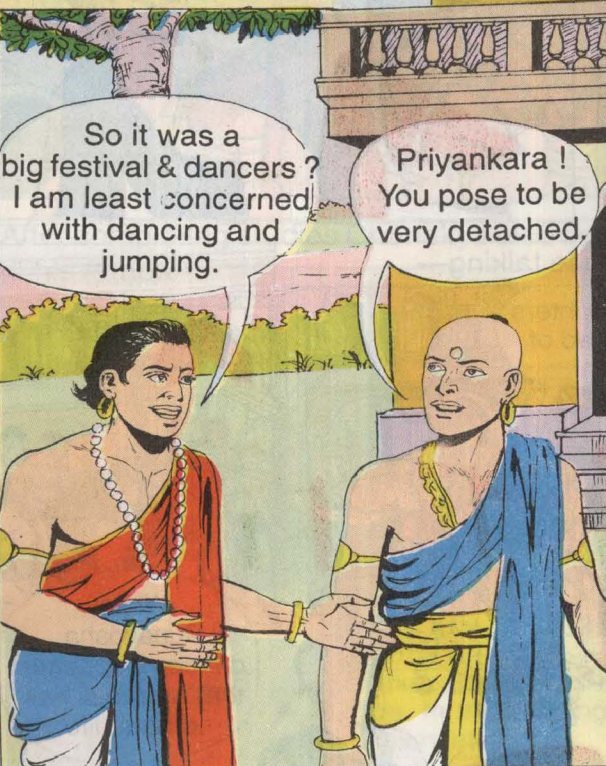
Why not. This place belongs to the royal courtesan Sunanda. It is the three day festival of Sharad Purnima.[#] Her daughters, Rupakosha and Chitrlekha, are the best dancers in Magadh. These people are talking about them.



Sthulabhadra (with disinterest)—

So it was a big festival & dancers ? I am least concerned with dancing and jumping.

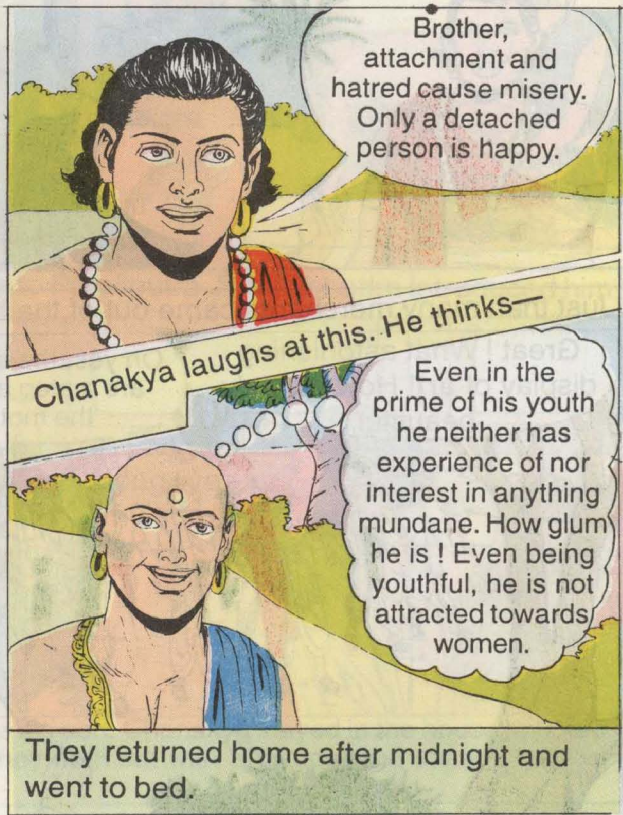
Priyankara ! You pose to be very detached.



Brother, attachment and hatred cause misery. Only a detached person is happy.

Chanakya laughs at this. He thinks—

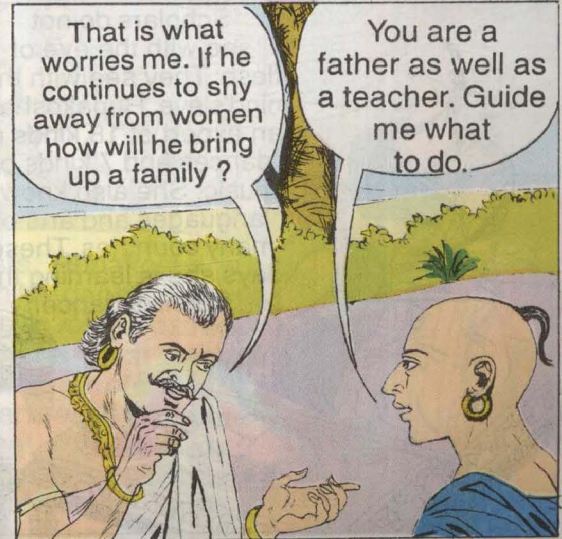
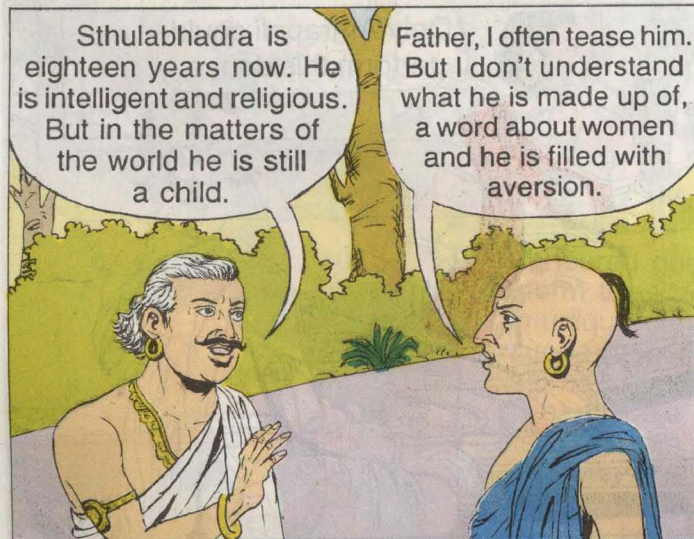
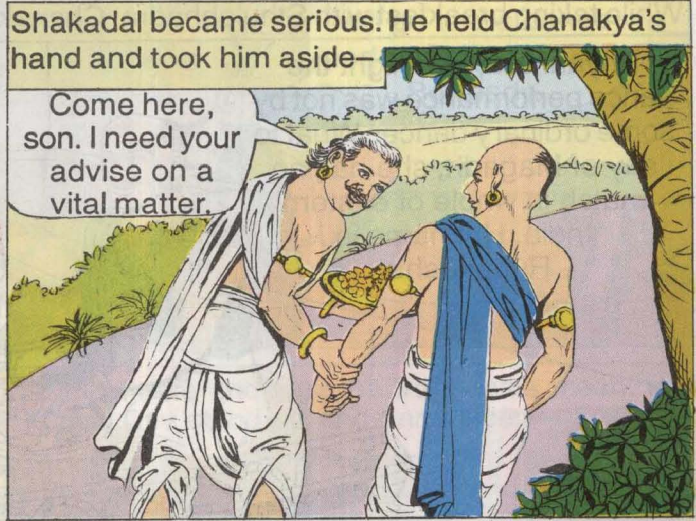
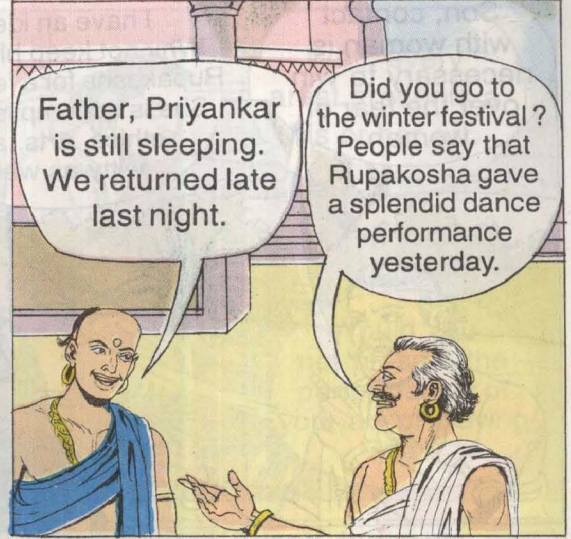
Even in the prime of his youth he neither has experience of nor interest in anything mundane. How glum he is ! Even being youthful, he is not attracted towards women.

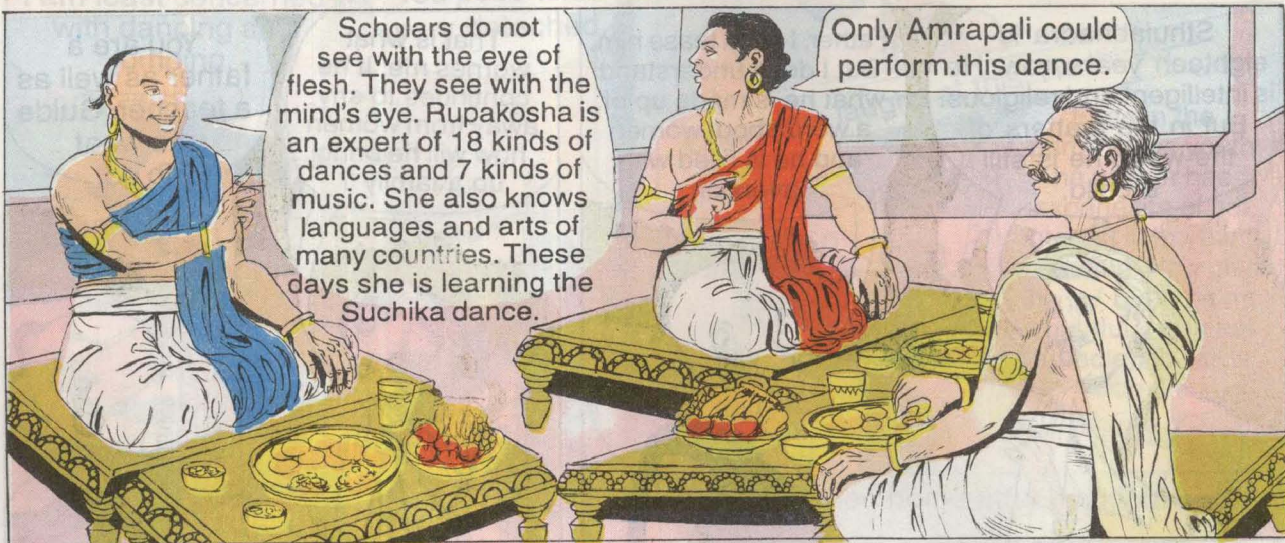
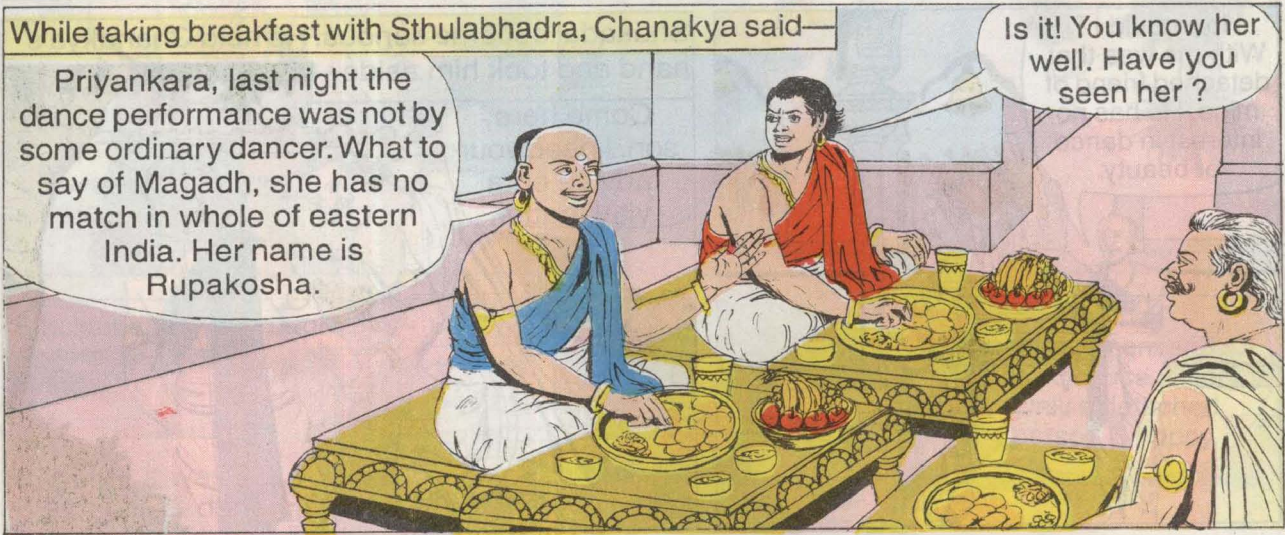
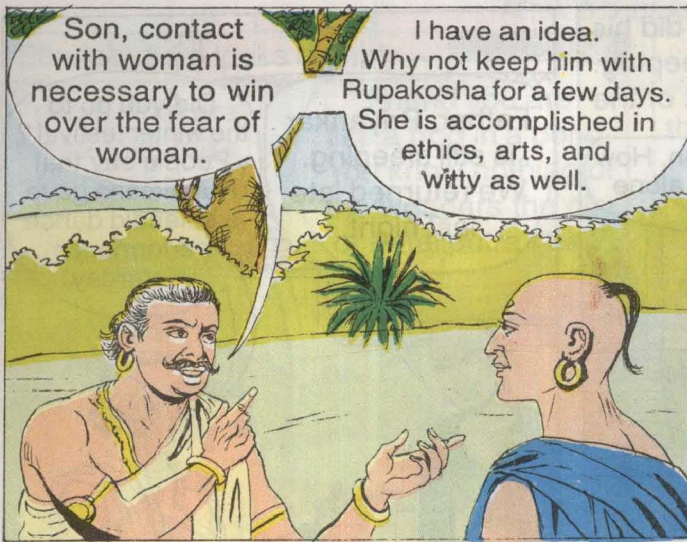


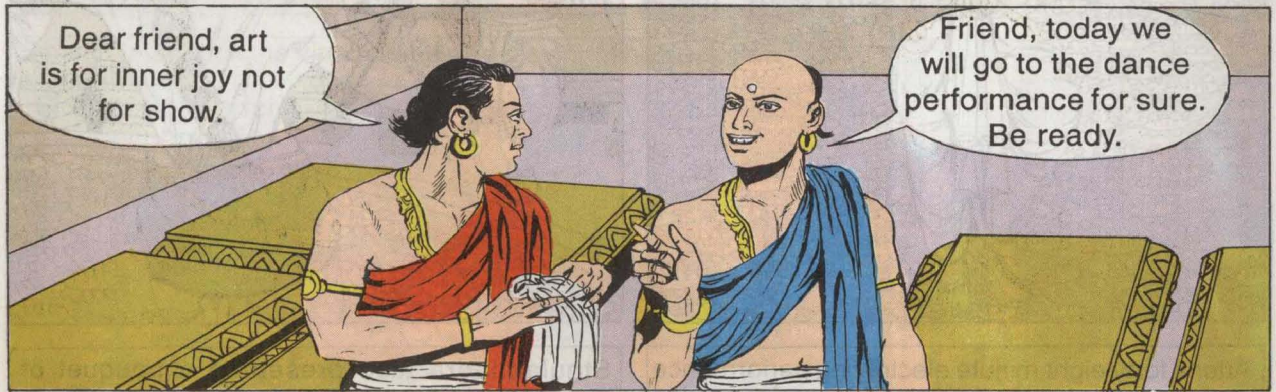
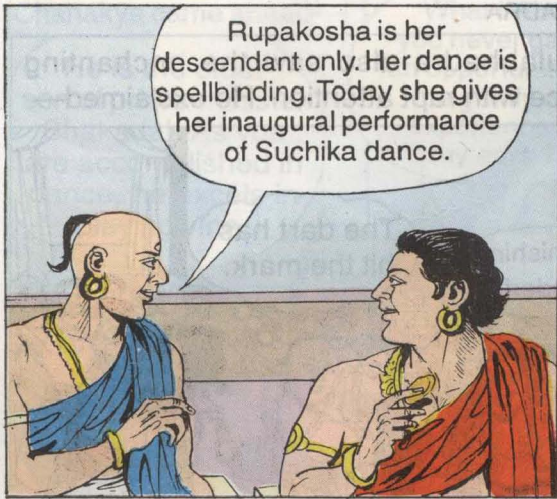
They returned home after midnight and went to bed.

Full-moon night of Ashvin month in winter.

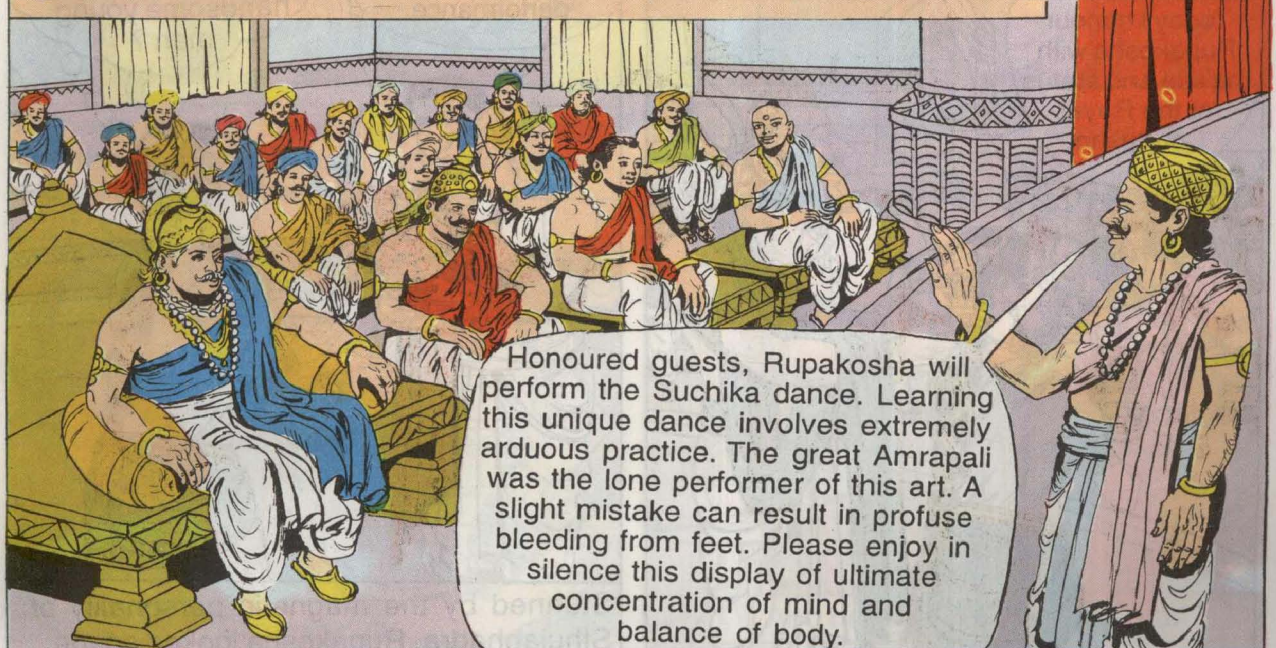
Next morning Chanakya got up early and did his daily chores. Sthulabhadra was still sleeping. When minister Shakadal was coming out of the temple he met Chanakya—







At night Chanakya came to the studio with Sthulabhadra and took the front seats meant for dignitaries. After some time the art teacher Kumar Dev stood up and announced—



Now Rupakosha came on stage, greeted the audience and commenced her dance.



Sthulabhadra also saw the enchanting dance with rapt attention. He exclaimed—

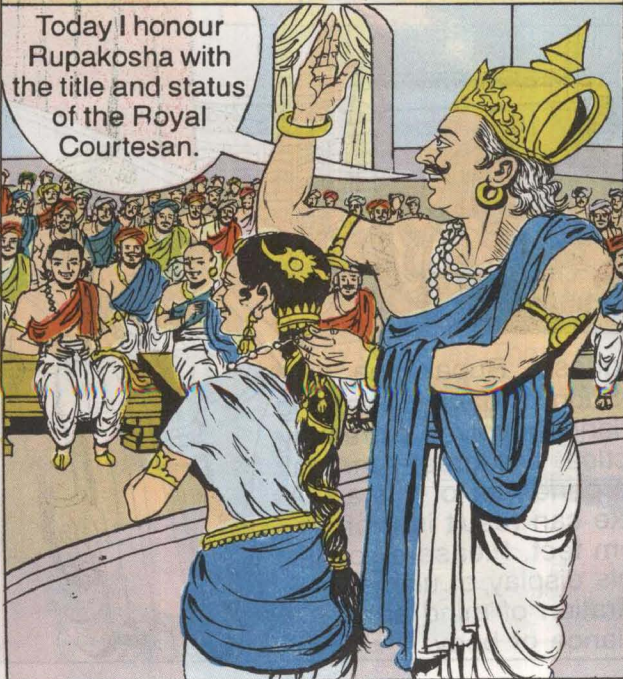


Astonishing!
Wonderful!

The dart has
hit the mark.

After a forty eight minute electrifying performance Rupakosha took a bow. King Ghananand put his valuable diamond necklace on Rupakosha's neck and announced—

Today I honour
Rupakosha with
the title and status
of the Royal
Courtesan.



Sthulabhadra also presented a bouquet of flowers to Rupakosha—

It was an astonishing
performance.

Who is this
radiant and divinely
handsome young
man?



Stunned by the magnetic personality of Sthulabhadra, Rupakosha looked agape.

Chanakya came ahead—

He is the elder son of prime-minister Shakadal. As you are accomplished in dance, he excels in playing vina.

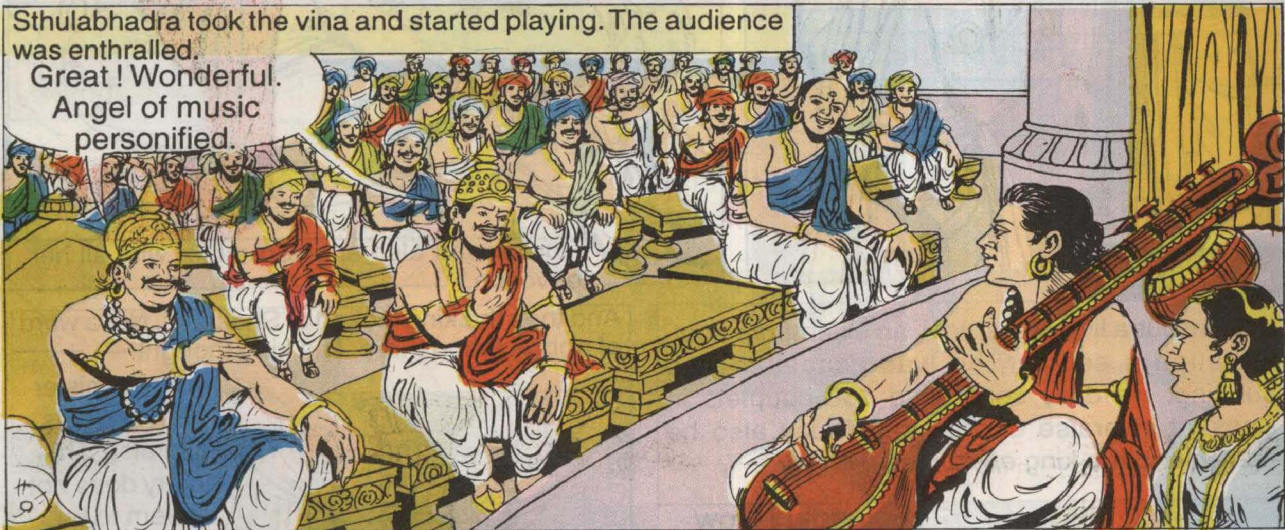
What ! And you never gave an opportunity of the gratifying experience to my ears ?

Why not enrich the festival today.

Yes, please allow the audience to enjoy the sweet melodies of your vina.

Sthulabhadra took the vina and started playing. The audience was enthralled.

Great ! Wonderful.
Angel of music personified.



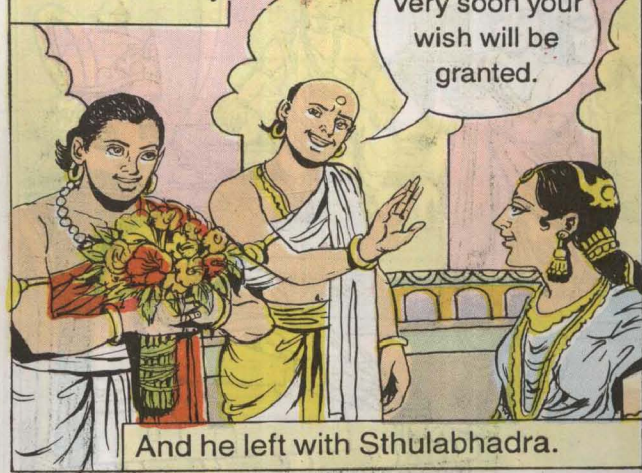
Duly responding to the applause, Sthulabhadra took his seat. Rupakosha presented a bouquet and asked with a smile—

When will I be honoured with your presence again.



Sthulabhadra just stared at her and did not utter a word. Chanakya said—

Very soon your wish will be granted.



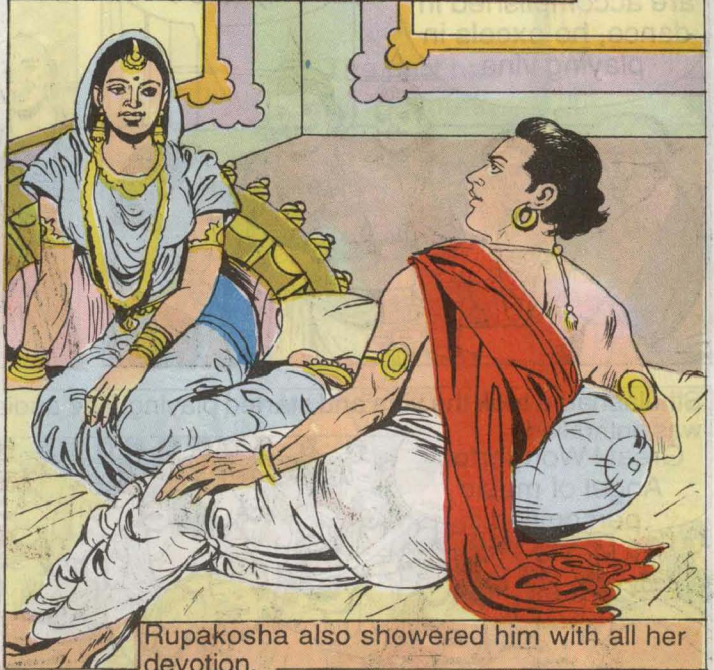
And he left with Sthulabhadra.

On returning home, Chanakya privately informed Shakadal—

Father! Your plan has succeeded.

Vishnu, you are clever and methodical.

Slowly Sthulabhadr and Rupakosha came closer. A time came when Sthulabhadr spent all his time with Rupakosha, staying in her mansion.



Rupakosha also showered him with all her devotion.

VARARUCHI

In Pataliputra lived Vararuchi, an extempore poet. Although a scholar, he was conceited and cunning. He daily composed 108 couplets in Sanskrit in praise of the king. Today also he recited and the king exclaimed with joy —

Splendid ! How beautiful !



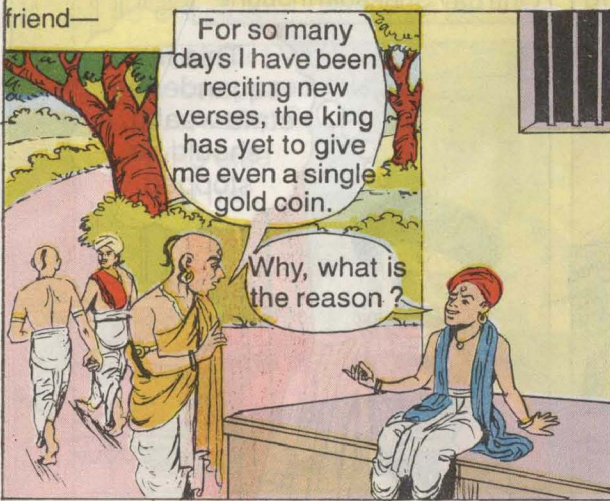
And then the king looked at Shakadal. Not a word of appreciation there. The king thought—

Prime-minister has no words of praise. This poetry does not seem to be worth a reward.



The king also turned his eyes.

Vararuchi returned empty handed and said to his friend—



All the state affairs are in Shakadal's hands. As long as he does not praise me, the king cannot give a penny even if he wants.

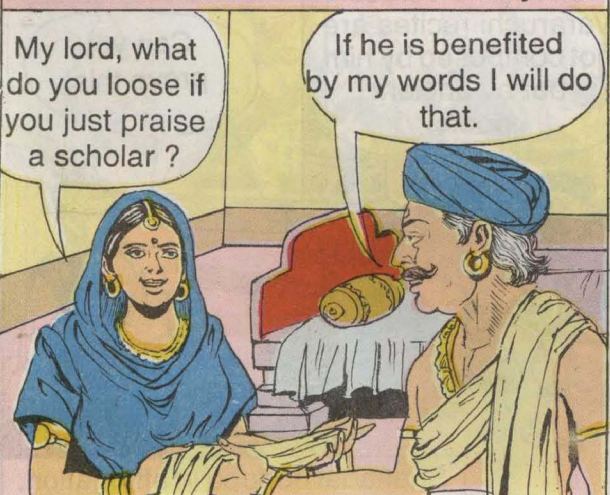
Friend, I will give you an advise. You should please Shakadal's wife Lakshmi. She is intelligent and generous too.



Next day Vararuchi went to Shakadal's house in the afternoon and telling his story to Lakshmi submitted—



Lakshmi brought up the matter next day—



Come morning Vararuchi recited his verses and the king looked at the prime-minister. Shakadal smiled—

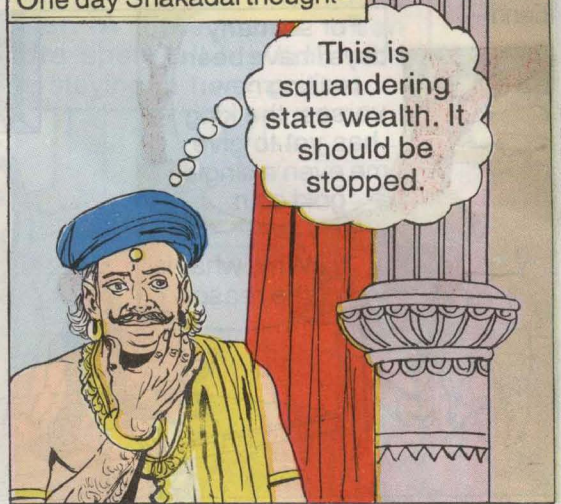


King Nand awaited this. He instructed the treasurer—



Now this became a daily affair. Vararuchi recited new verses and got 108 gold coins.

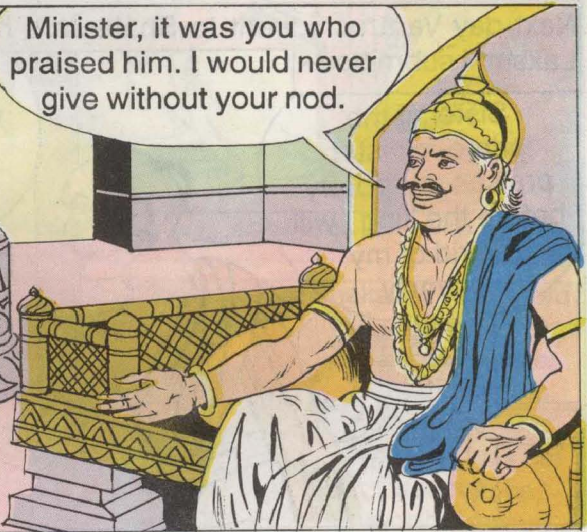
One day Shakadal thought—



Next day he asked the king—



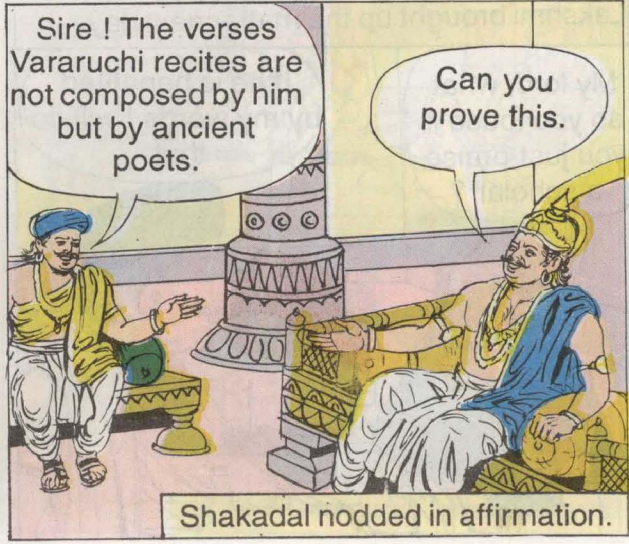
Minister, it was you who praised him. I would never give without your nod.



Sire ! I praised the poetry not the scholarship of the person.

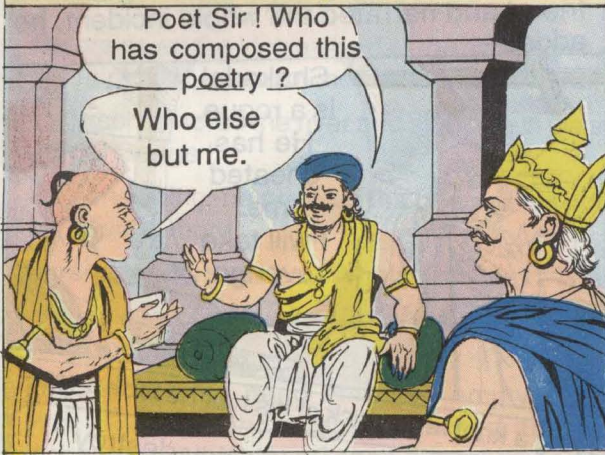


Sire ! The verses Vararuchi recites are not composed by him but by ancient poets.

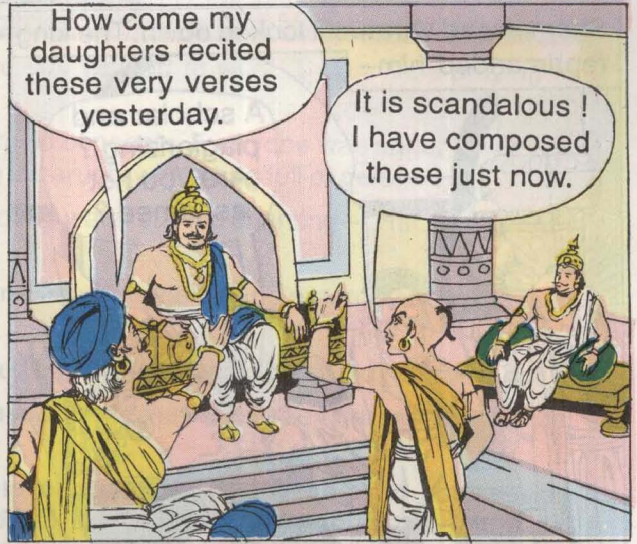


Shakadal nodded in affirmation.

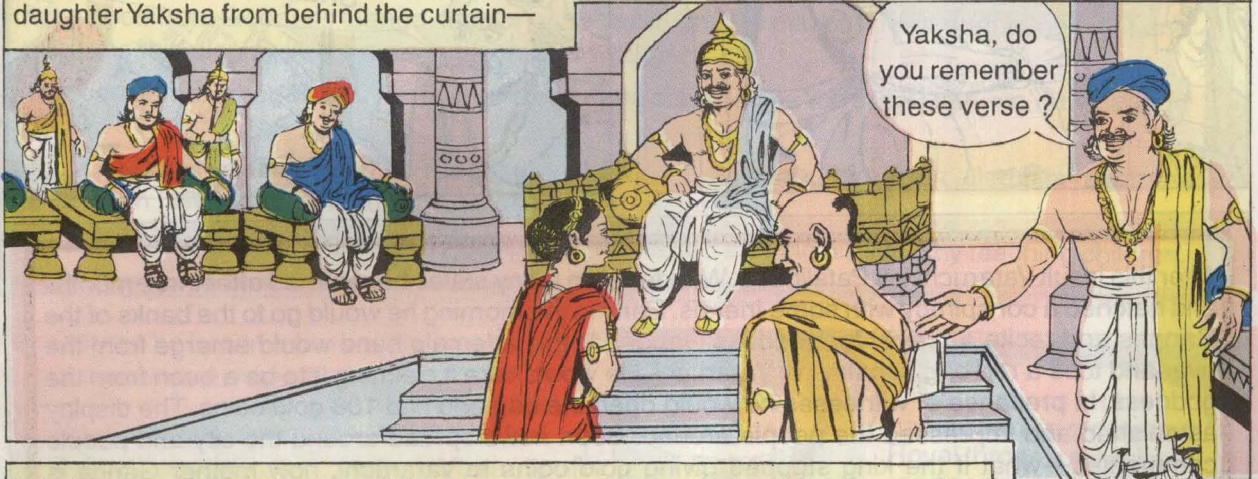
Next day Vararuchi recited his verse in style. When he concluded Shakadal asked—



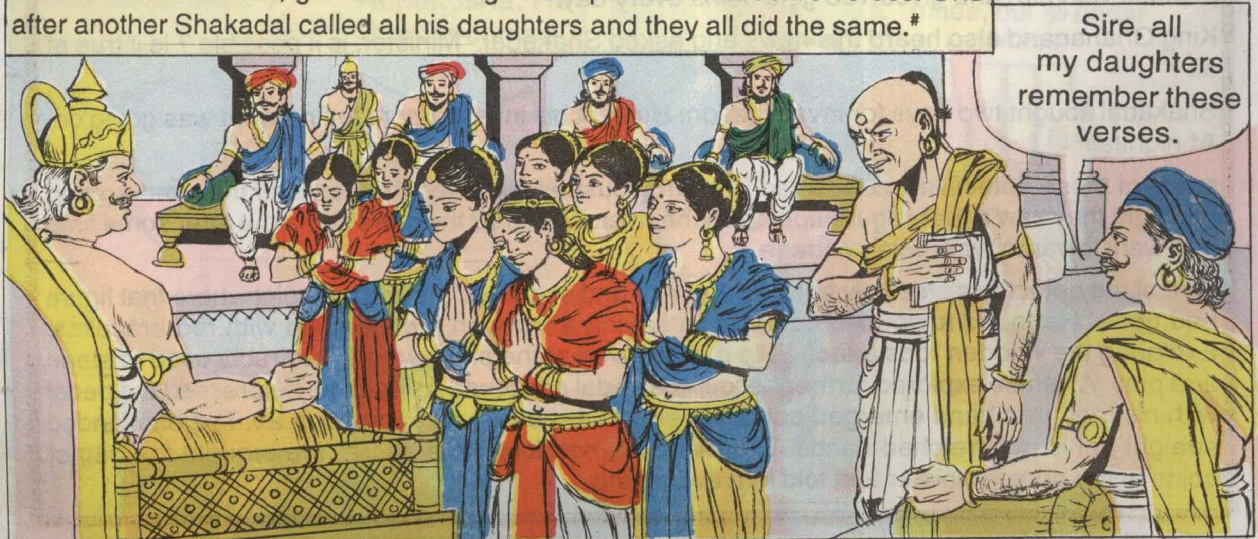
How come my daughters recited these very verses yesterday.



This accusation surprised the whole assembly. Vararuchi was also annoyed. Shakadal then called his daughter Yaksha from behind the curtain—



Yaksha came forward, greeted the king and repeated Vararuchi's verses. One after another Shakadal called all his daughters and they all did the same.*

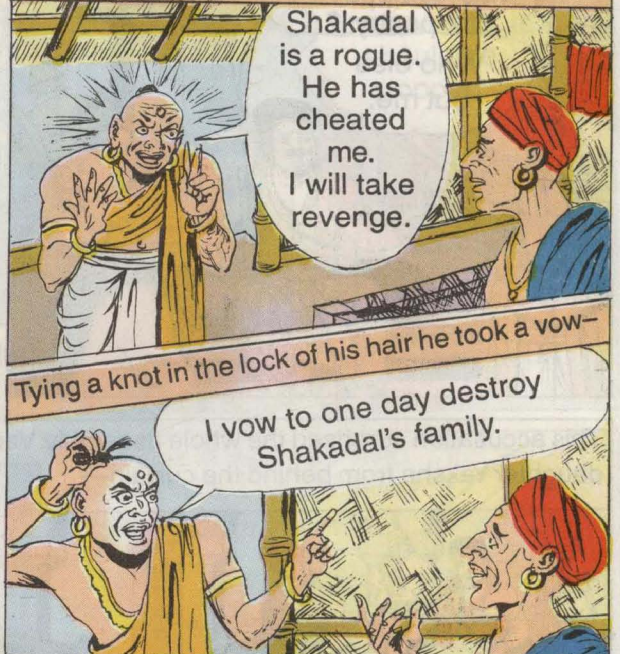


* All seven daughters of Shakadal were endowed with unique memory-skills. Yaksha memorized anything that she heard once, the second one when she heard twice, and so on. The seventh memorized all she heard seven times. That is how they all repeated the verses.

Shamefaced Vararuchi looked down. The king reprimanded him—



Irritated by this insult, Vararuchi thumped out of the assembly. He went straight to his friend and narrated the whole incident. he added—



After this insult Vararuchi left Pataliputra. Wandering in many states he returned after three months and hatched a conspiracy with some friends. Early in the morning he would go to the banks of the Ganges and recite a prayer for goddess Ganga. At this a female hand would emerge from the river and toss a red bag in palms of Vararuchi. He would take it claiming it to be a boon from the goddess. In presence of witnesses he would open the bag and find 108 gold coins. The display astonished and impressed the people around. Soon news spread around the city and people commented—what if the king stopped giving gold coins to Vararuchi, now mother Ganga is pleased with him and gives 108 gold coins every day.

King Ghananand also heard this news and asked Shakadal, “Minister, is it possible? Is it true at all?”

Shakadal sought two days for investigation. He sent his investigators to find what was going on. At nightfall

some of these detectives, concealed in nearby bushes, watched the banks of the river. Around midnight they saw a male figure approach the river. It entered the river, came out after some time and went towards Vararuchi's cottage.

One of the detectives stealthily entered the river and searched around the point where that figure had gone. He found a wooden contraption having a wooden female hand with red bracelets. Exploring the wooden rods attached to it, he arrived at the place where Vararuchi used to stand and pray. When he explored further he found a pedal and lever. As soon as he pressed the pedal with his feet, that hand emerged out of water and a red bag was tossed in air. The bag landed straight in his outstretched hands. The detective had found the secret. He brought the bag of coins to the prime-minister and told him everything.

Shakadal went to the king and requested, "Sire you wanted to witness Vararuchi praying to Goddess Ganga, please come along."

Before dawn the king arrived at the spot with a crowd of people. Everyone was eager to witness the miraculous seen of mother Ganga rewarding Vararuchi with a bag full of gold.

Vararuchi entered the river and standing in waist deep water started chanting—"Har Har Gange ! Jai Jai Gange !"

On concluding, he pressed the pedal of his contraption. A female hand emerged from the river but it was empty.

Vararuchi was stunned, "What happened ? The red bag filled with gold coins did not come out ?"

He again invoked loudly—"Mother Ganga be pleased. Bless me ! Bless me ! Har Har Gange ! Jai Jai Gange !"

Once again the hand emerged empty. In spite of several tries the bag did not appear. Prime Minister Shakadal approached and said, "O Brahmin ! Here is your bag. Don't get disheartened if mother Ganga did not bless you a bag of gold. I give you one, here, take it."

Vararuchi looked down with shame. Shakadal revealed the secret and added, "Sire, this bag is not a boon from Goddess Ganga. It belongs to Vararuchi. He places it here during the night and performs this display in the morning to impress people."

The king admonished Vararuchi, "Why did you need such deceit. You are a Brahmin, why defraud people."

Vararuchi looking down left the crowd. The onlookers also cursed him and called him names—"Charlatan ! Hypocrite ! Rogue !" Vararuchi at last left the town.

But six months later he returned to Pataliputra and started earning his living by teaching children.

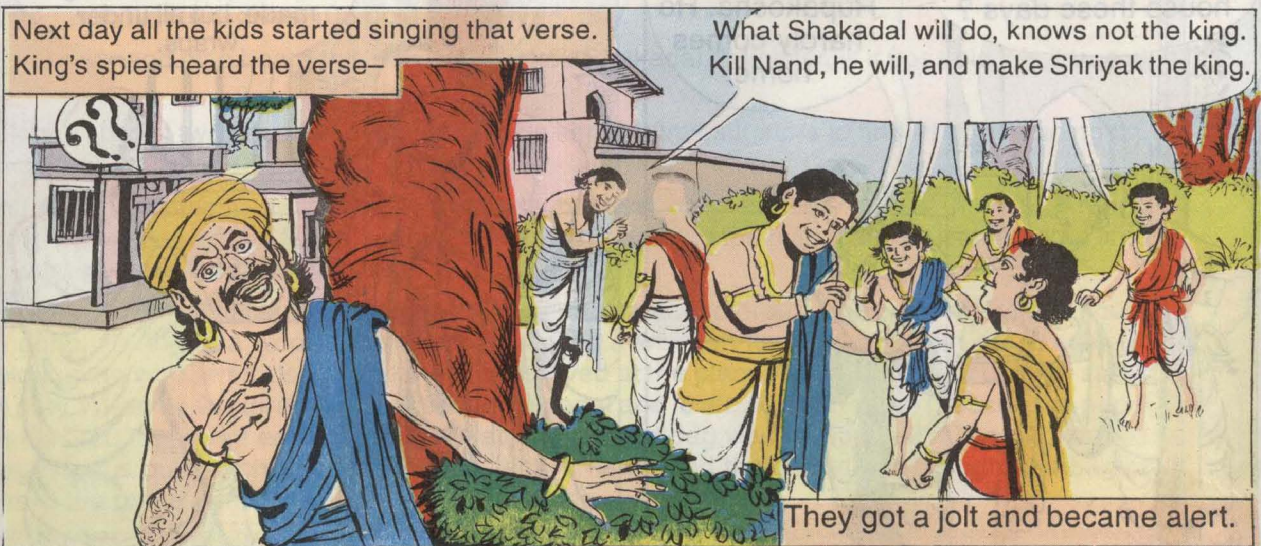
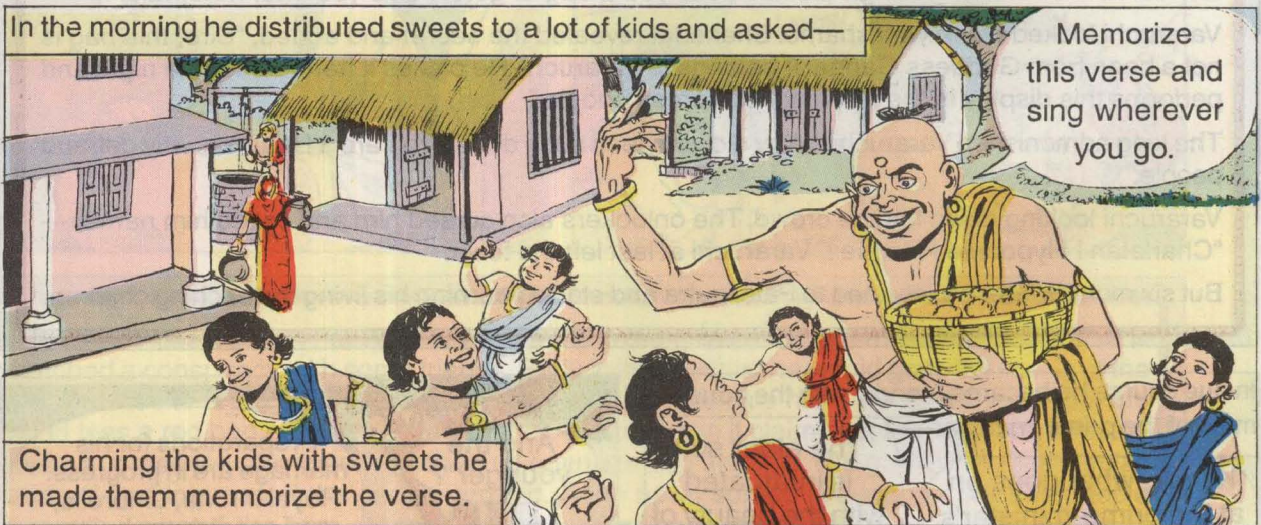
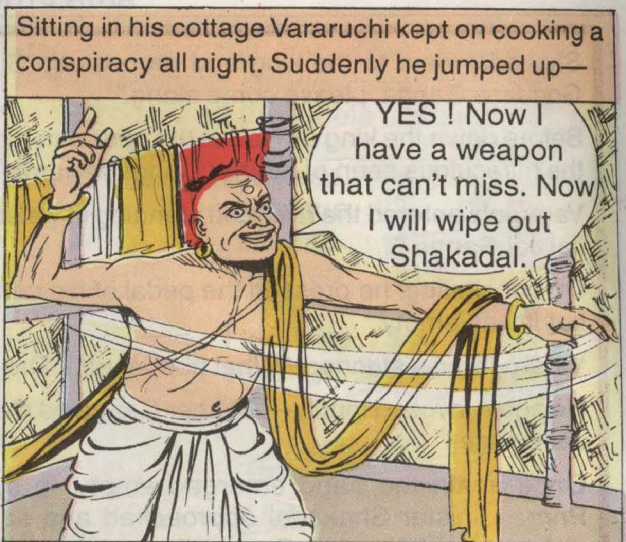
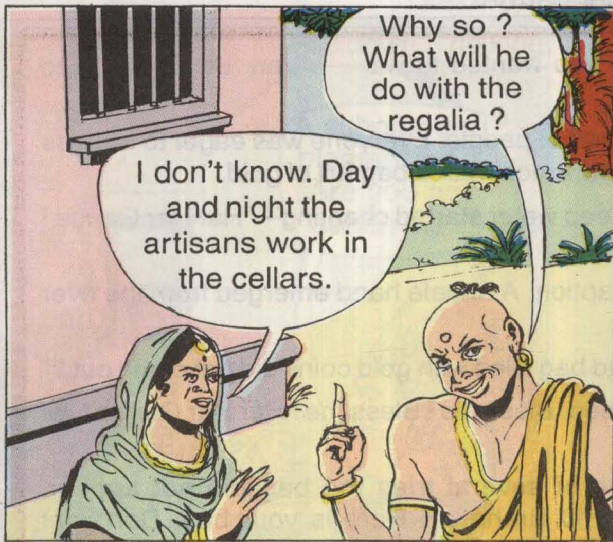
In due course he became friendly with the housemaid of the prime-minister—

Ketaki, what goes on at the prime-minister's house these days ?

The elder son is infatuated with the beauty of Rupakosha. He hardly comes home.

And the younger ?

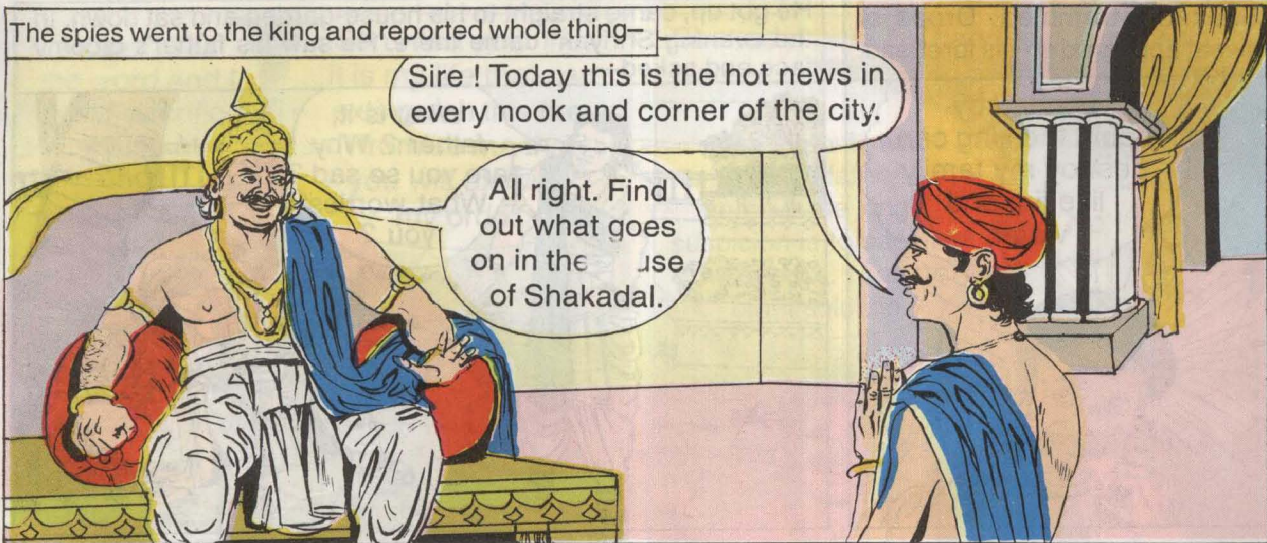
Preparations for his marriage are in progress. Royal throne, umbrella, and scepter are being made, but all under wraps.



The spies went to the king and reported whole thing—

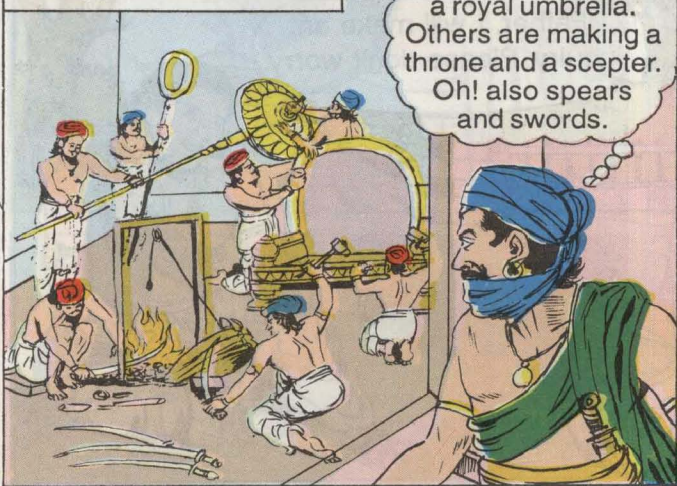
Sire ! Today this is the hot news in every nook and corner of the city.

All right. Find out what goes on in the use of Shakadal.



The spy came and saw—

Some one makes a royal umbrella. Others are making a throne and a scepter. Oh! also spears and swords.



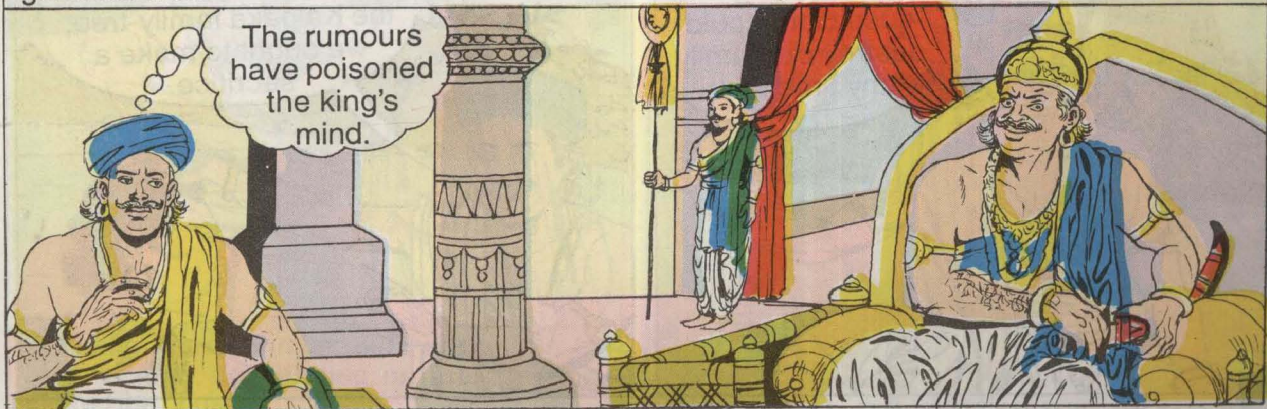
On getting the information the king got worried—

It certainly is some conspiracy. It appears to be a revolt.

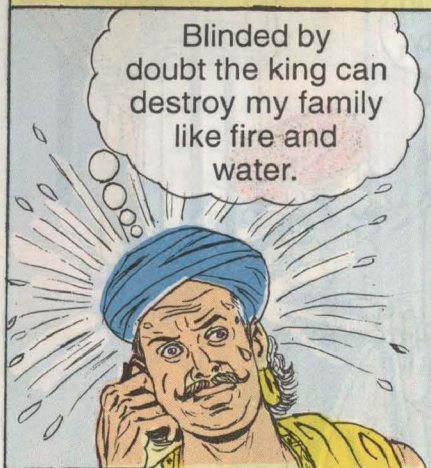


The poison of suspicion filled Nand's mind. His eyes turned red with anger when Shakadal came and greeted him in the morning. He looked away and his hand reached for the sword again and again. Shakadal was aware of the rumours. When he saw Nand's posture he guessed it all—

The rumours have poisoned the king's mind.



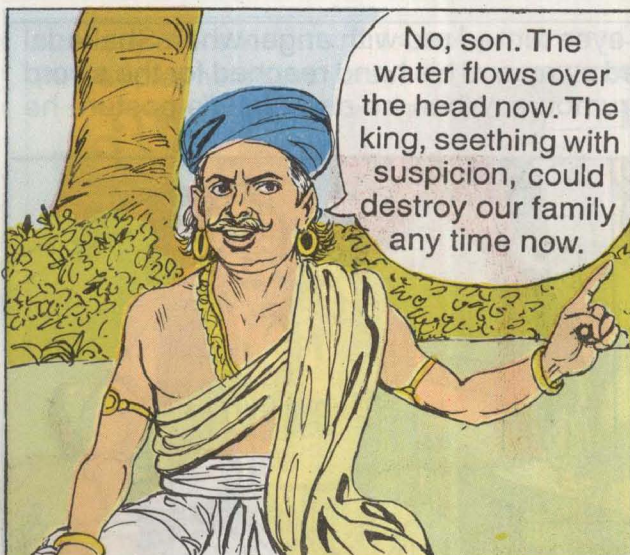
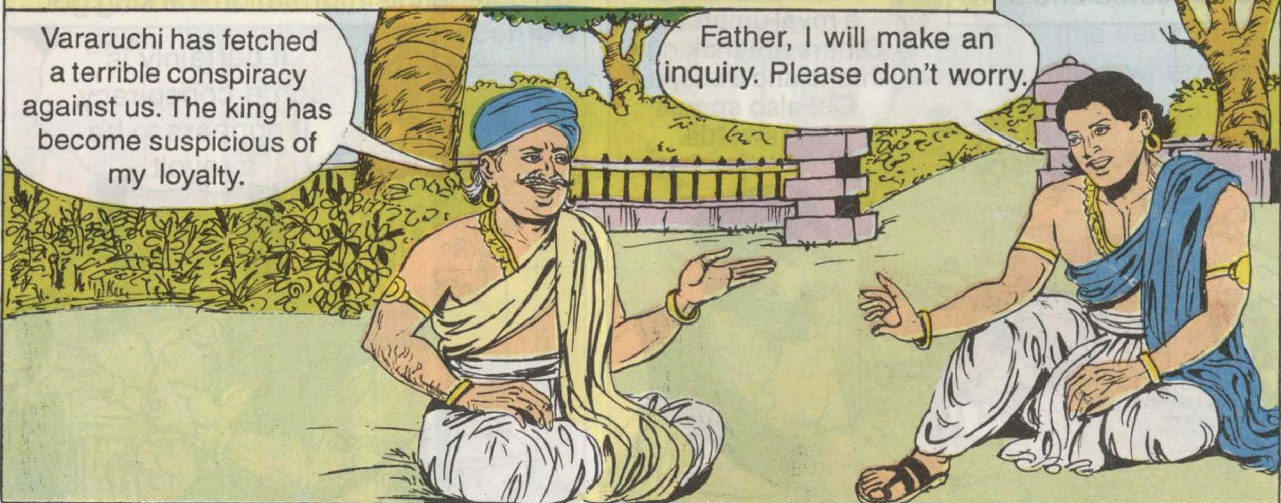
Shakadal trembled. Drops of sweat appeared on his forehead.



He got up, came straight to his house-garden and sat down. In the evening Shriyak[#] came there. He saw his father's gloomy face and asked—



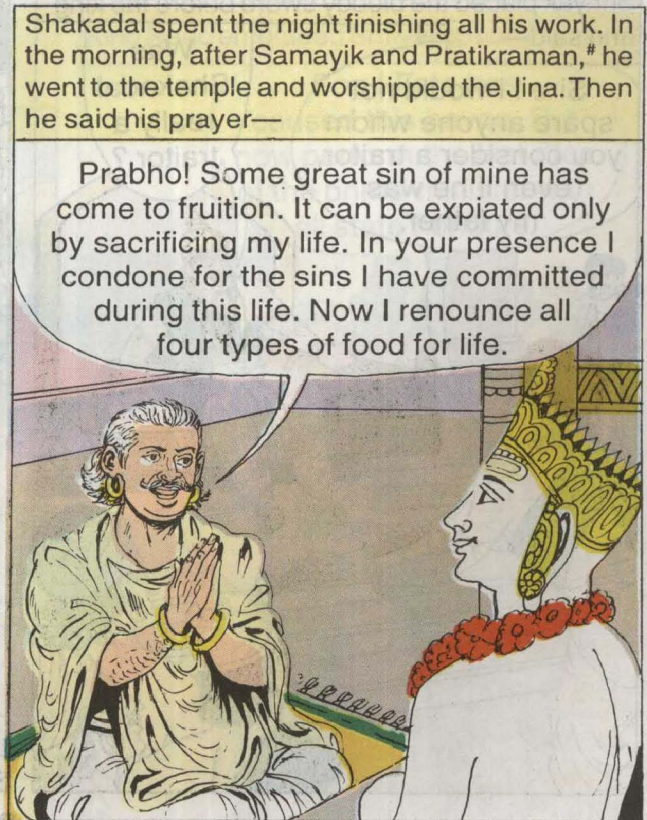
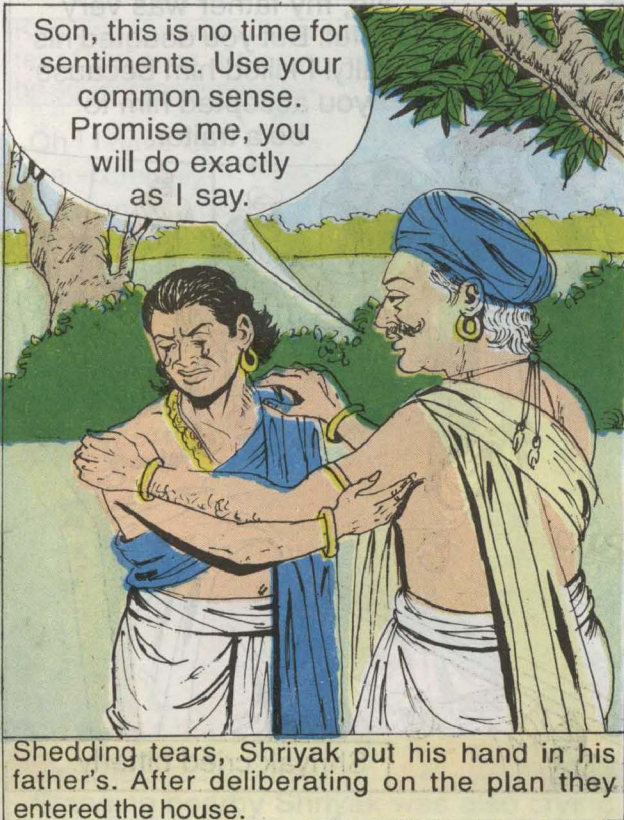
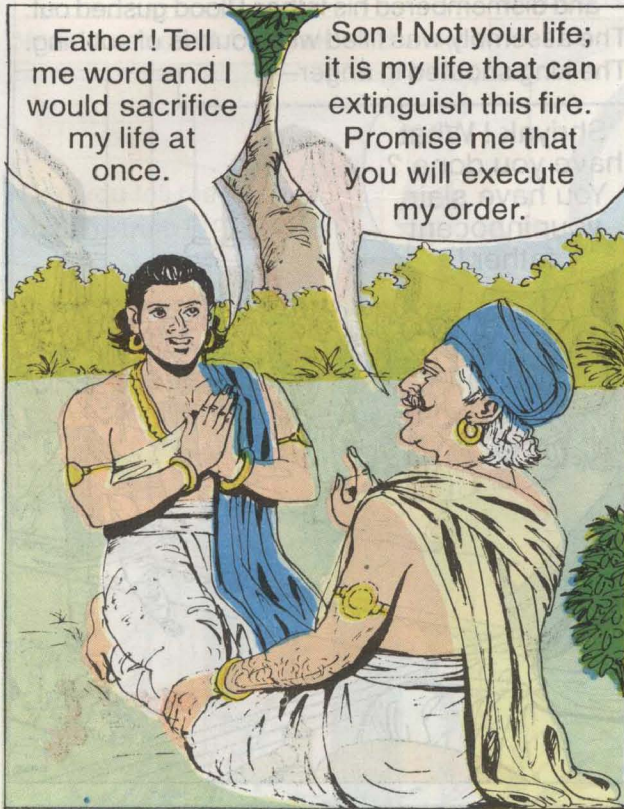
After some time Shakadal spoke about the rumours and added—



Then he put his hand on Shriyak's head and said—



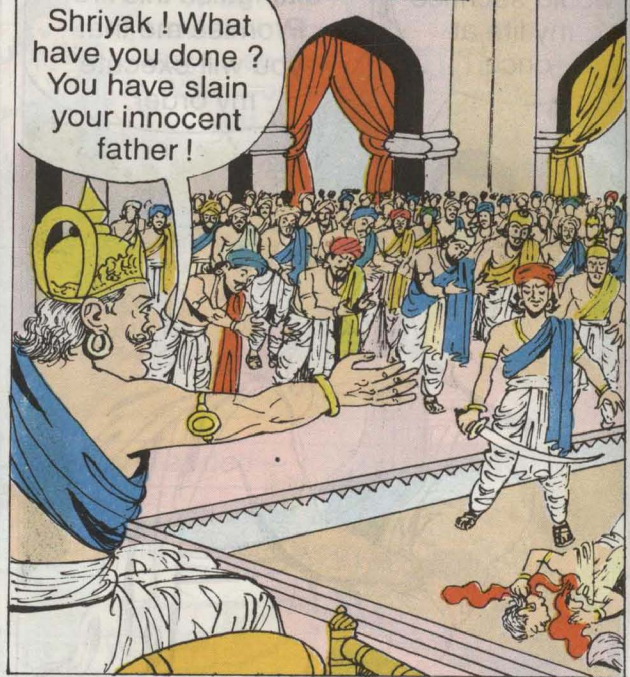
[#] He was the chief of bodyguards of King Ghananand.



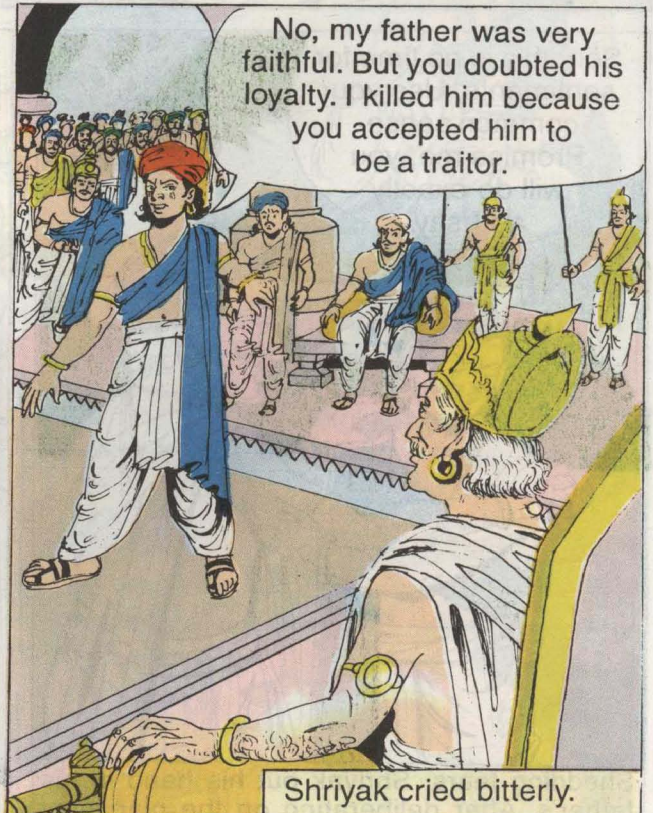
And he left at once for the assembly. On entering he bowed his head before the king to greet him. Shriyak, standing at his back, hit him with sword—



—and dismembered his father. Blood gushed out. The assembly was filled with sounds of sobbing. The king shouted in anger—



Shriyak placed the bloody sword before the king and said—



Nand consoled Shriyak and asked—

Can you tell me what the truth is ?



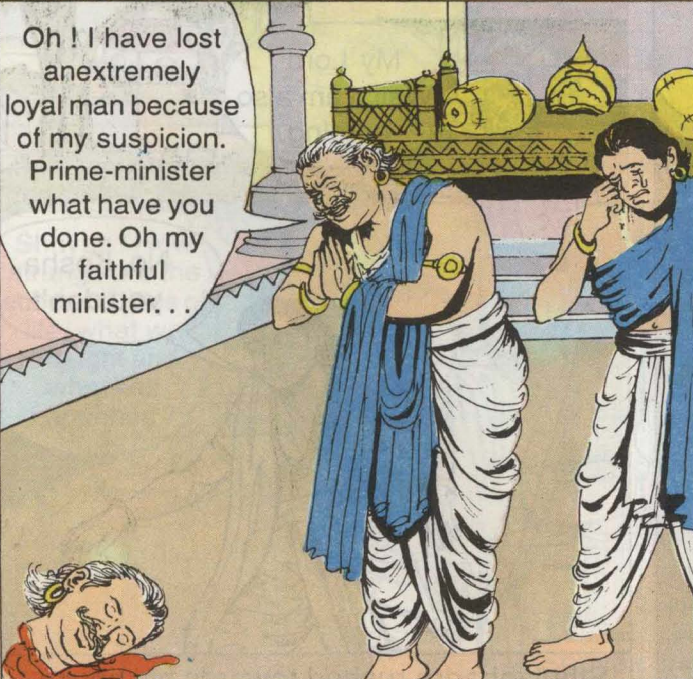
Shriyak told the story—

All that activity was for making gifts, umbrella and all, to be presented to you on the occasion of my marriage.



Knowing the truth Ghananand repented with tear filled eyes. Standing near the dead body he sought forgiveness—

Oh ! I have lost an extremely loyal man because of my suspicion. Prime-minister what have you done. Oh my faithful minister. . .



Standing nearby Shriyak was also crying.

King Nand embraced Shriyak to comfort him—

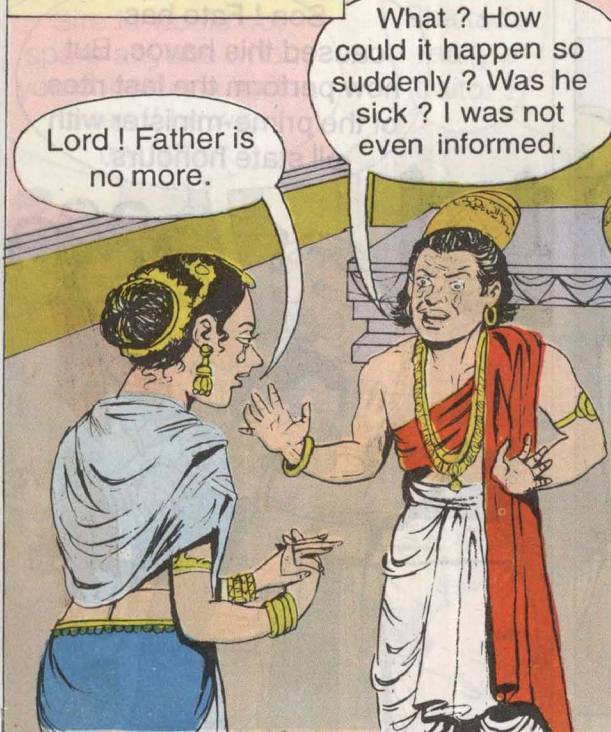
Son ! Fate has caused this havoc. But now perform the last rites of the prime-minister with all state honours.



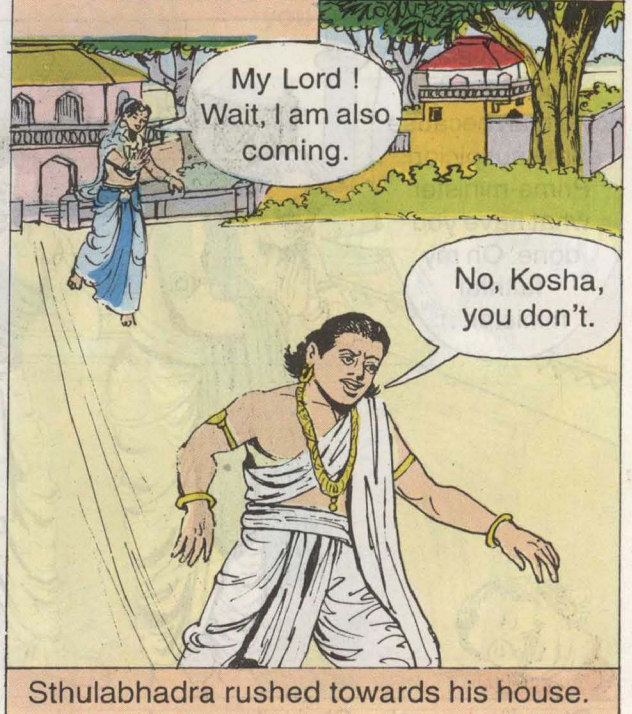
A maid called Champa informed Rupakosha—



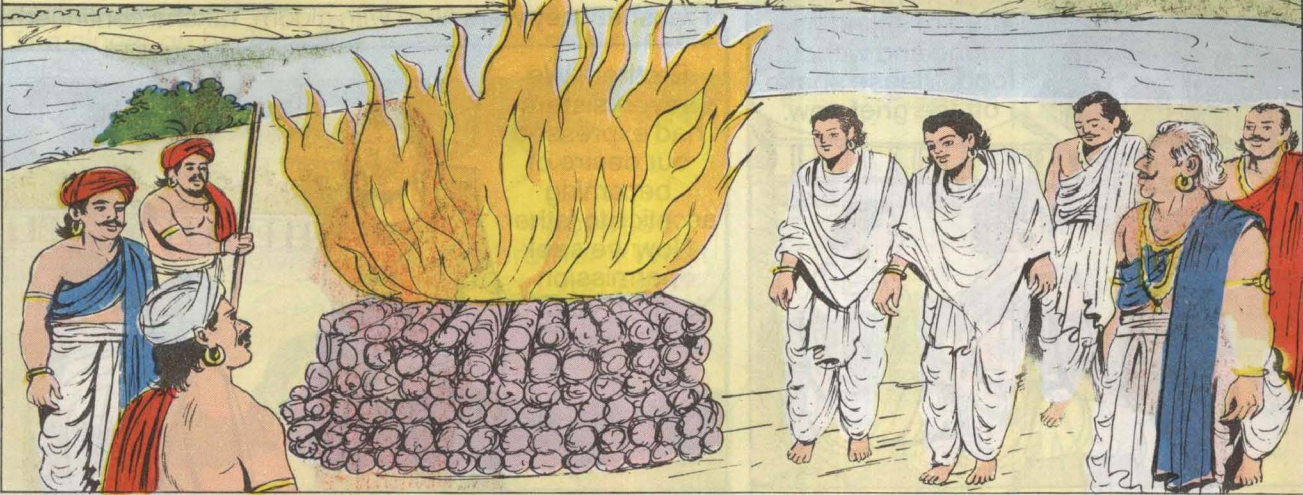
Rupakosha also had tears in her eyes. She informed Sthulabhadra—



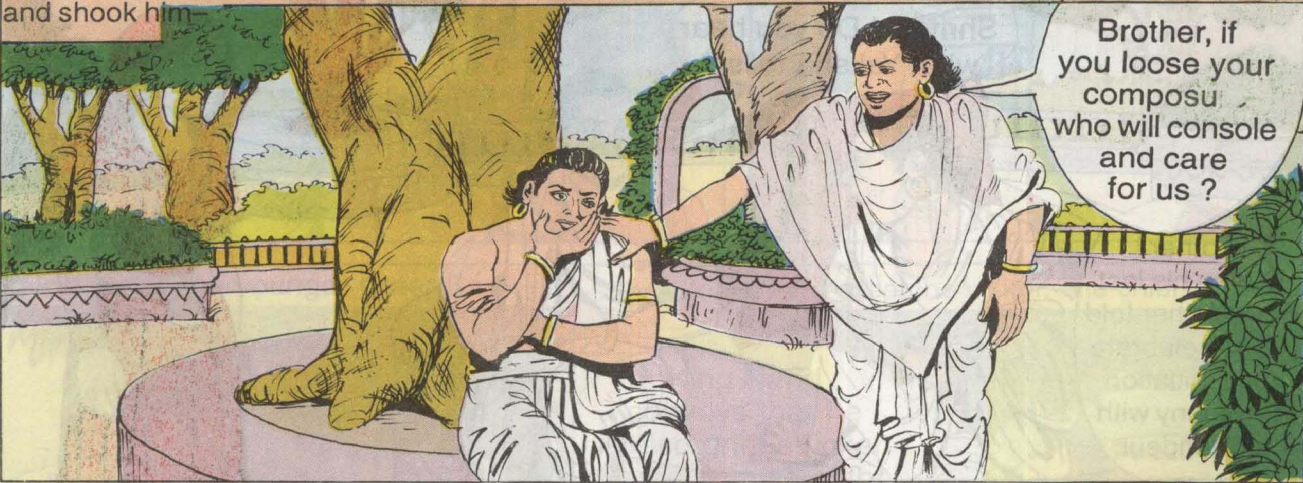
When Rupakosha told about the incident Sthulabhadra at once left, as he was, without even shoes. Kosha ran after him—



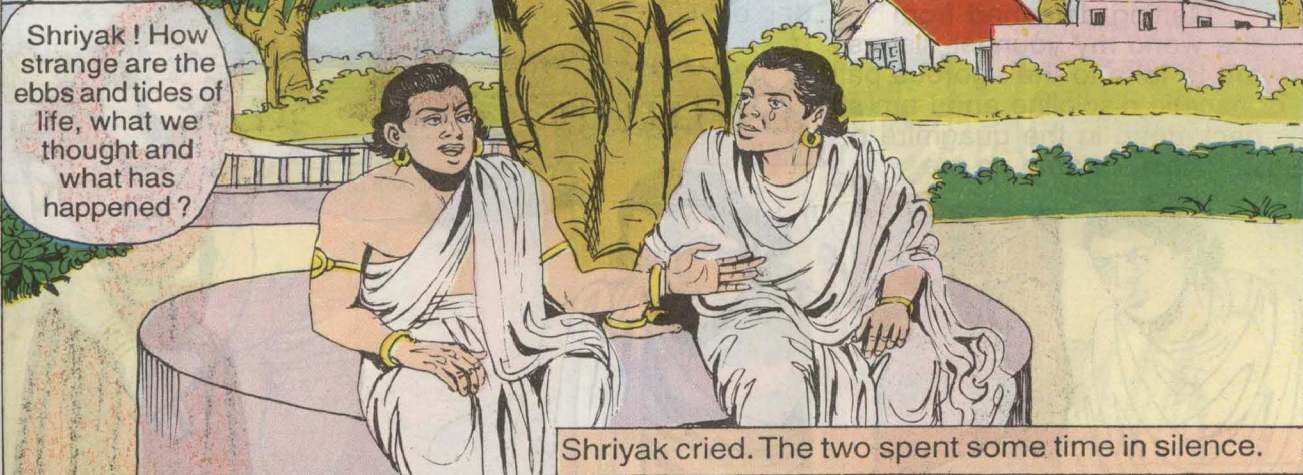
The two brothers performed the last rites.



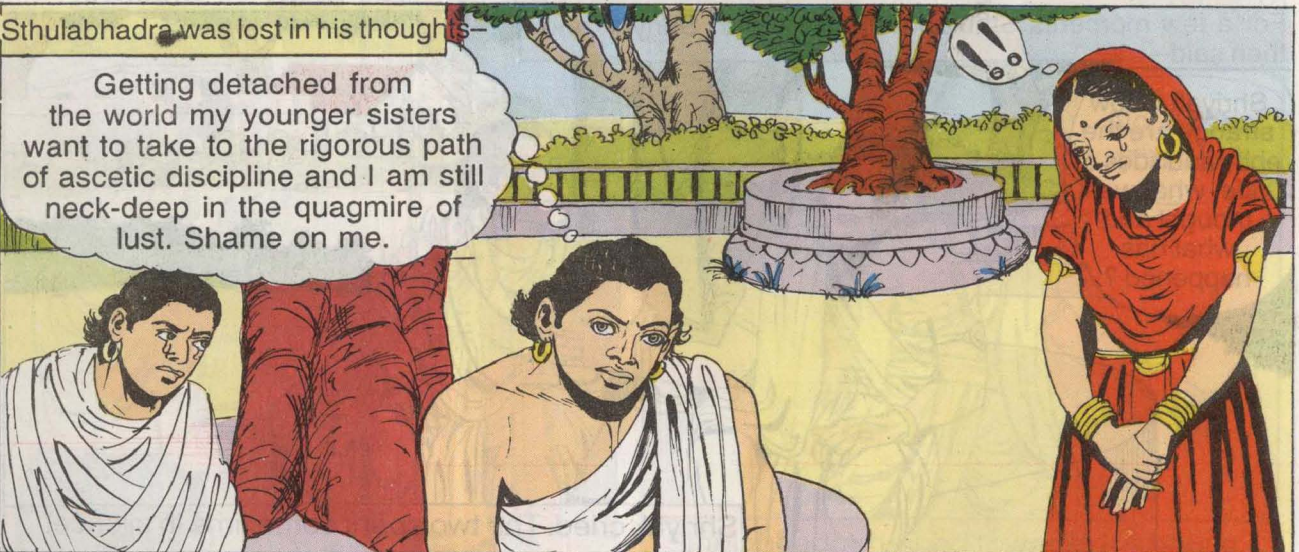
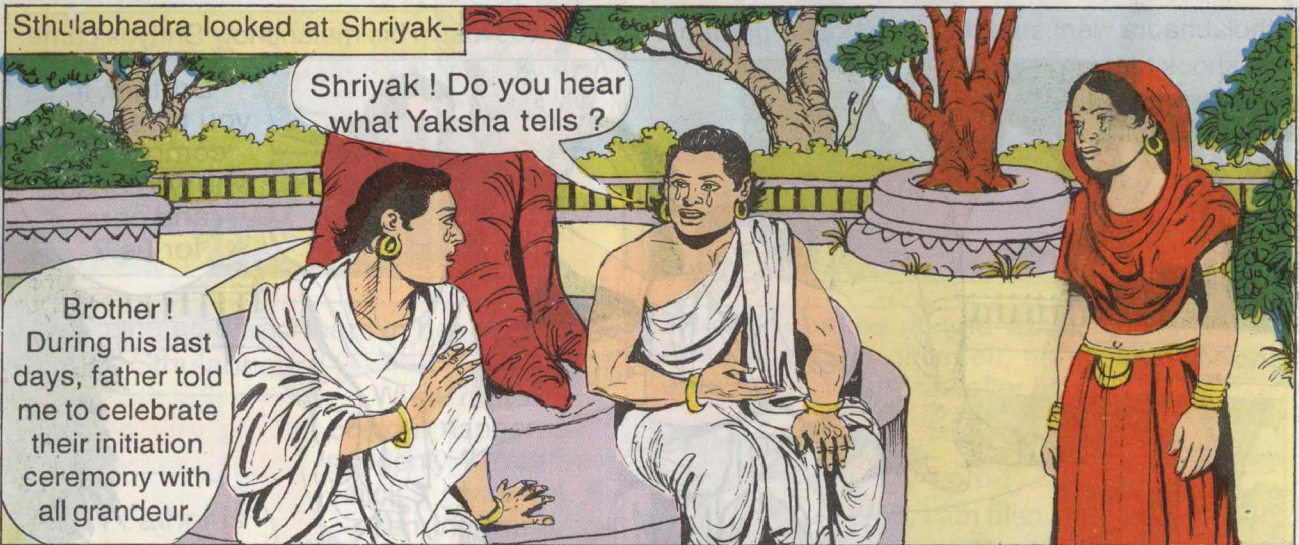
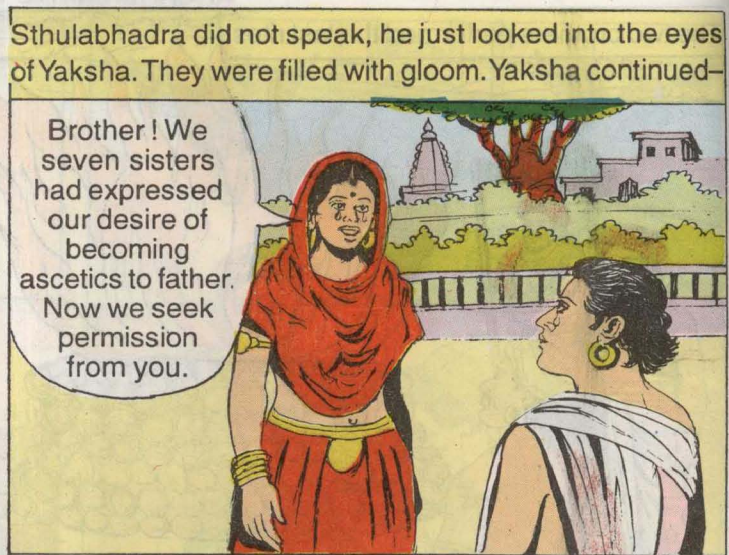
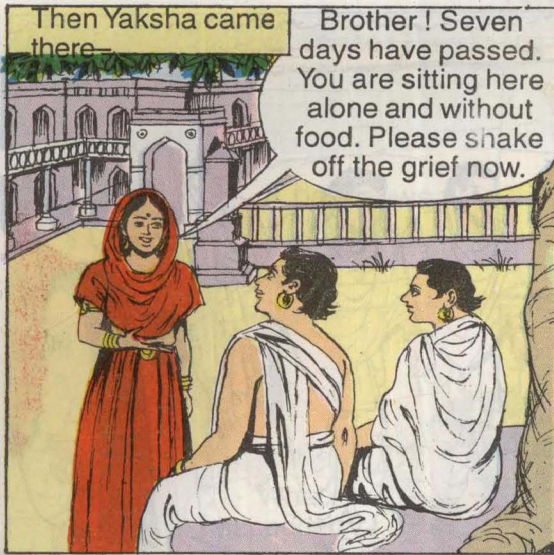
Sthulabhadra went straight to the house-garden. While he was lost in his melancholy Shriyak came and shook him—



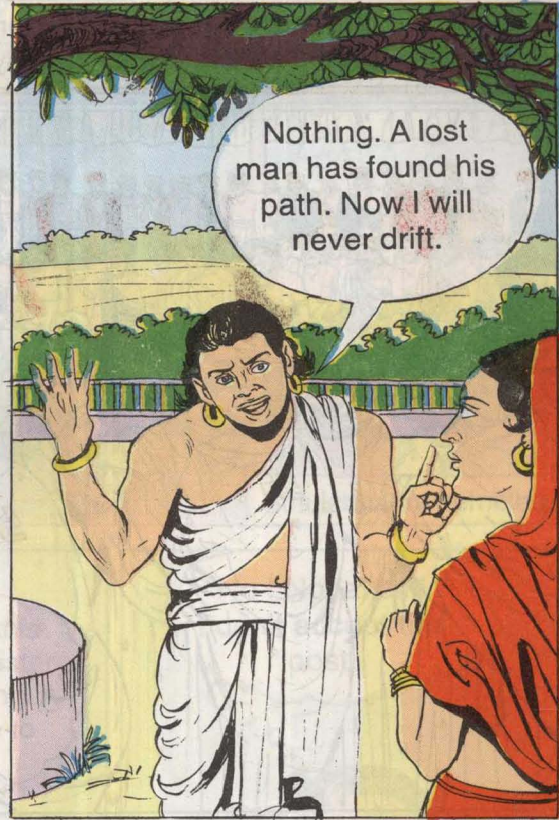
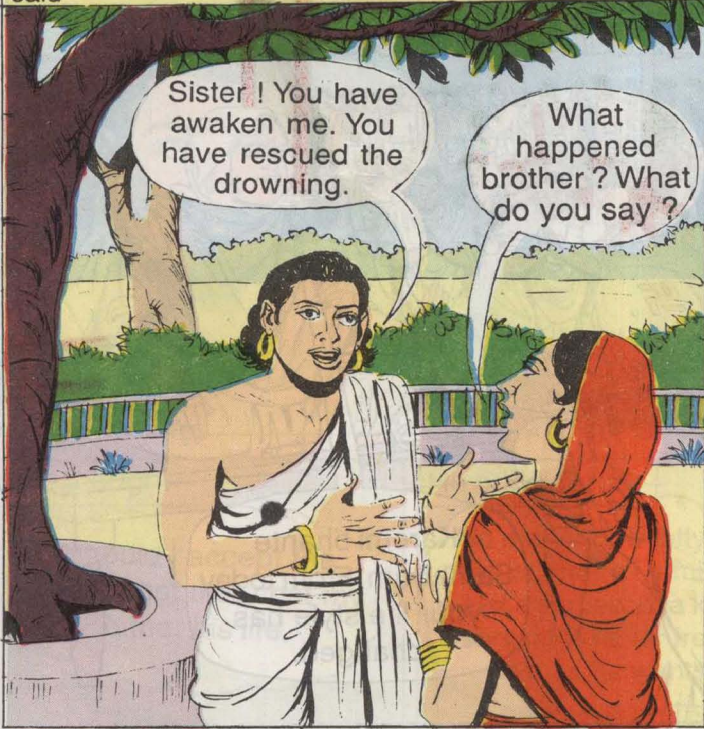
For a few moments Sthulabhadra looked at Shriyak and then said—



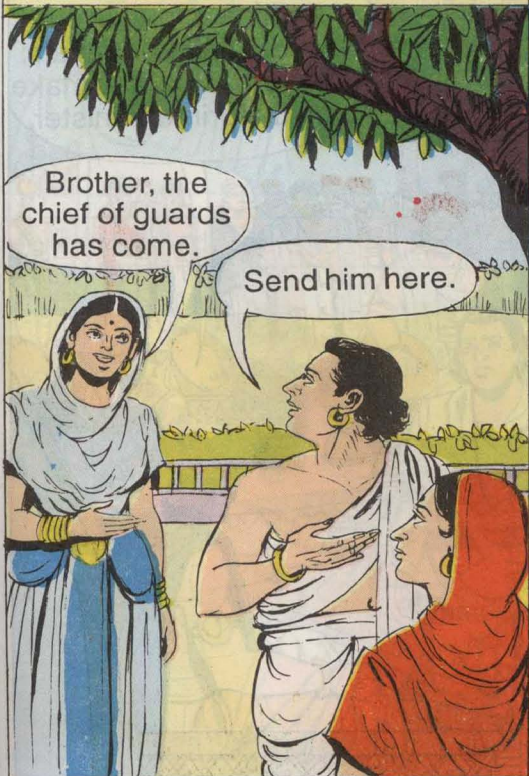
Shriyak cried. The two spent some time in silence.



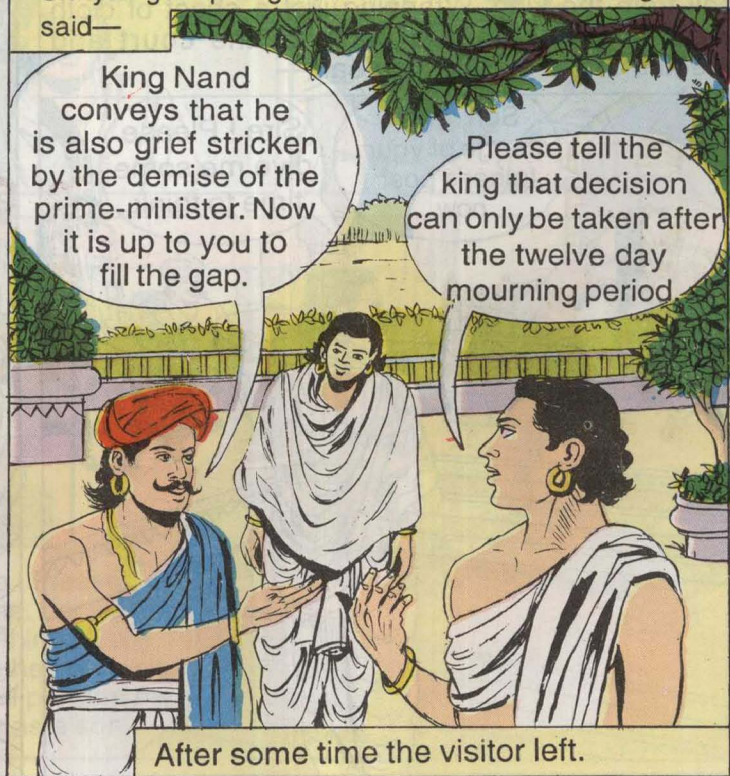
As if struck by a thunderbolt Sthulabhadra jumped up. The gloom on his face was replaced by radiance. He said—



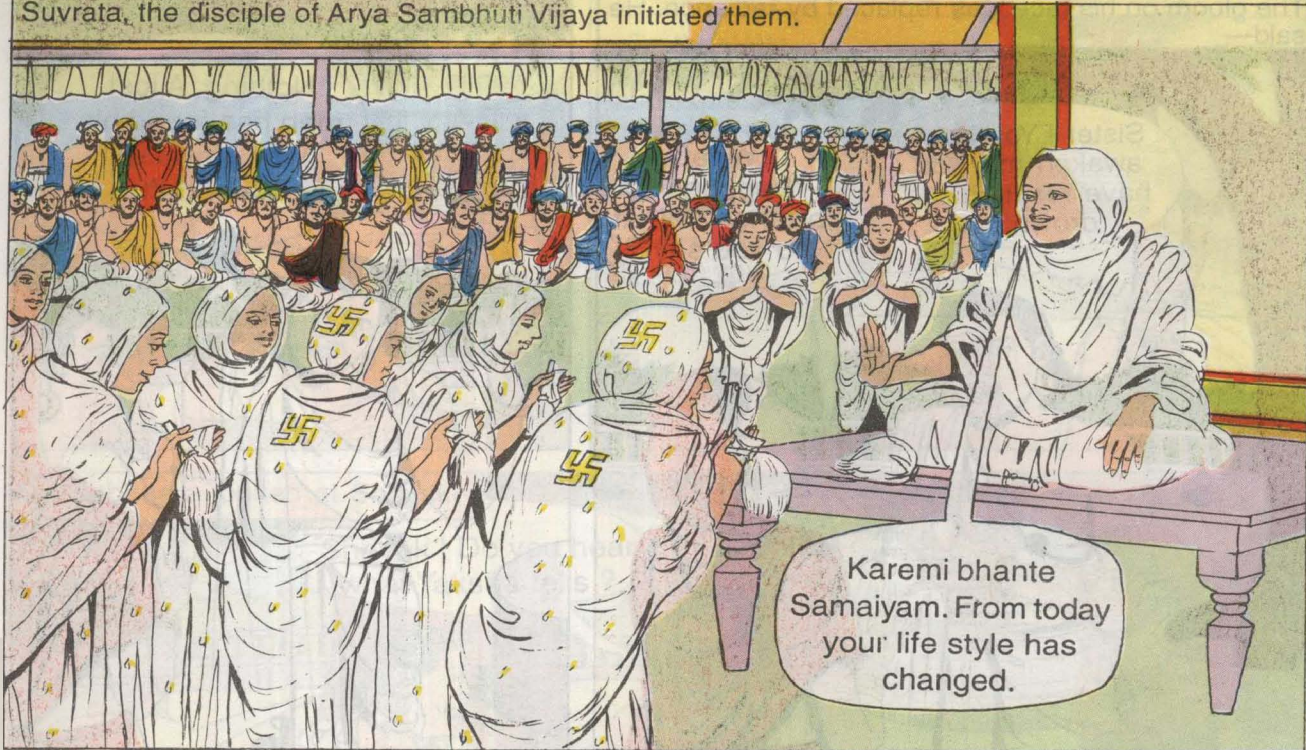
Now came the younger sister Sena—



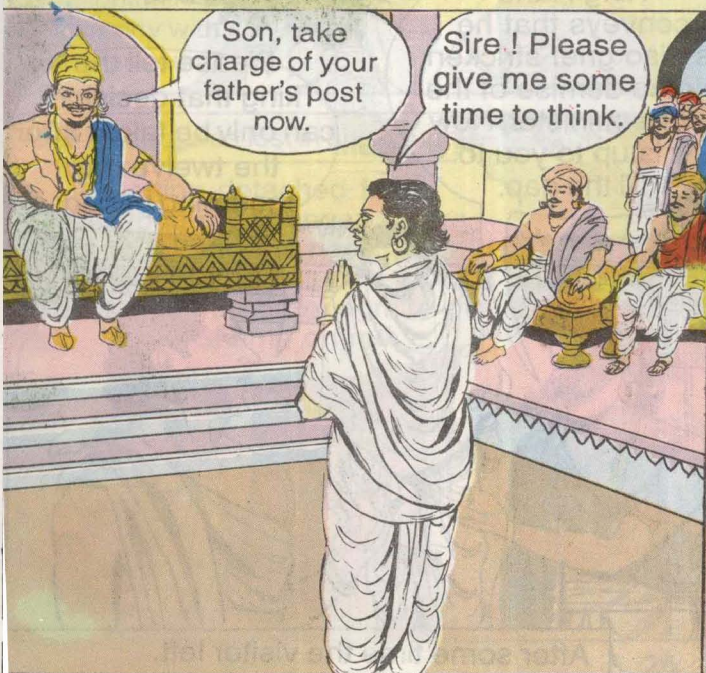
Shriyak got up to greet the visitor. The chief of guards said—



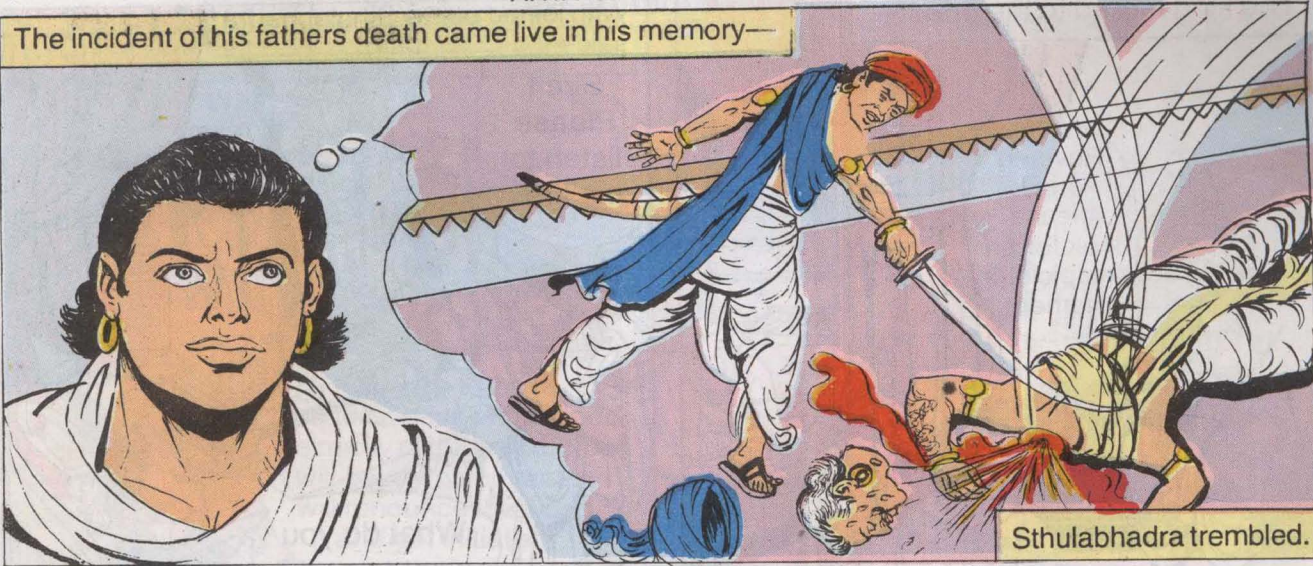
After the mourning period was over, the two organized the initiation ceremony of seven sisters. Mahattara Suvrata, the disciple of Arya Sambhuti Vijaya initiated them.



A few days later, king's emissary brought another call from the king. Wrapping just a sheet of cloth around, Sthulabhadra came to the court and greeted the king. The king said—



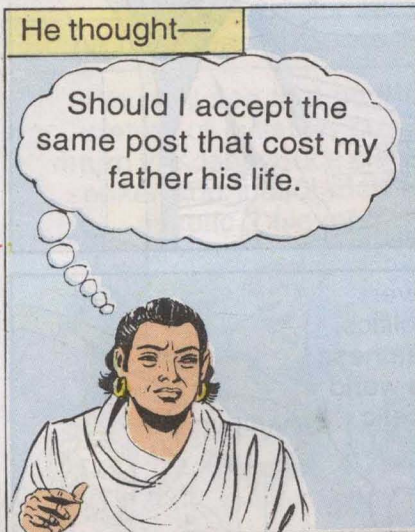
The incident of his fathers death came live in his memory—



Sthulabhadra trembled.

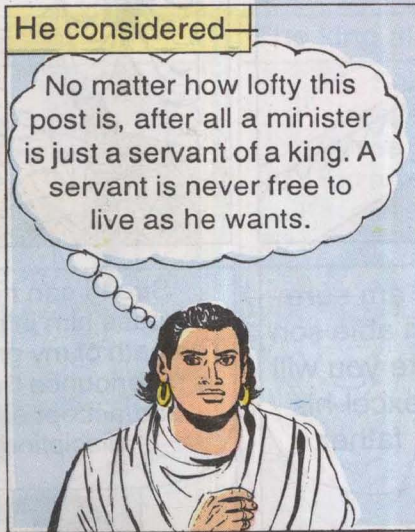
He thought—

Should I accept the same post that cost my father his life.



He considered—

No matter how lofty this post is, after all a minister is just a servant of a king. A servant is never free to live as he wants.



No ! Not at all ! I can't accept this post.



After all this deliberation he said firmly—

Sire ! Please pardon me. Considering everything I have reached the conclusion that I will perform my duty as a son.

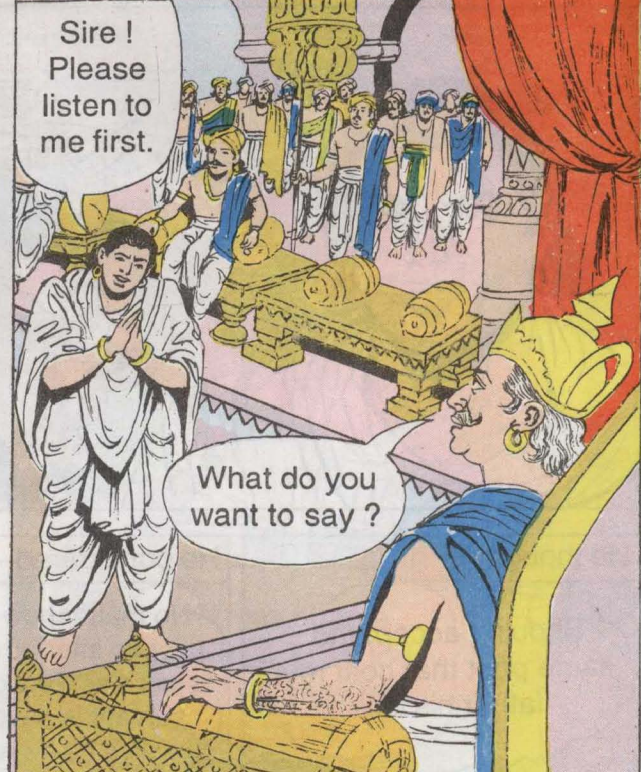
Yes, that is what I want.



The king turned to the priest—

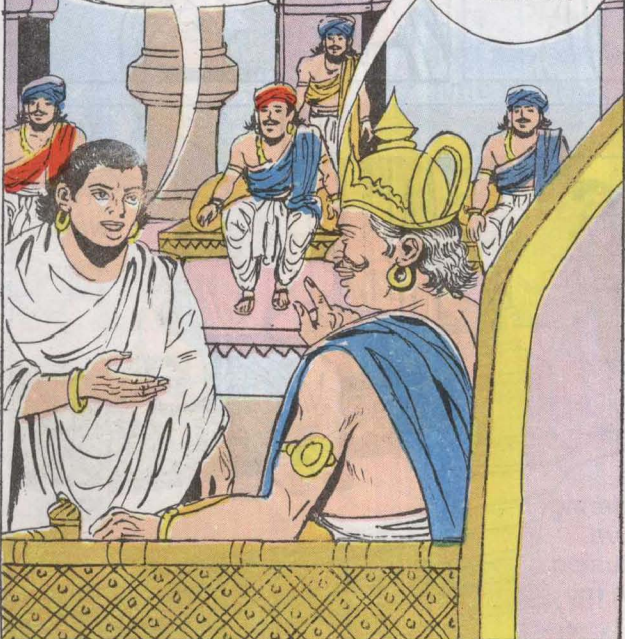


With joined palms Sthulabhadra said—



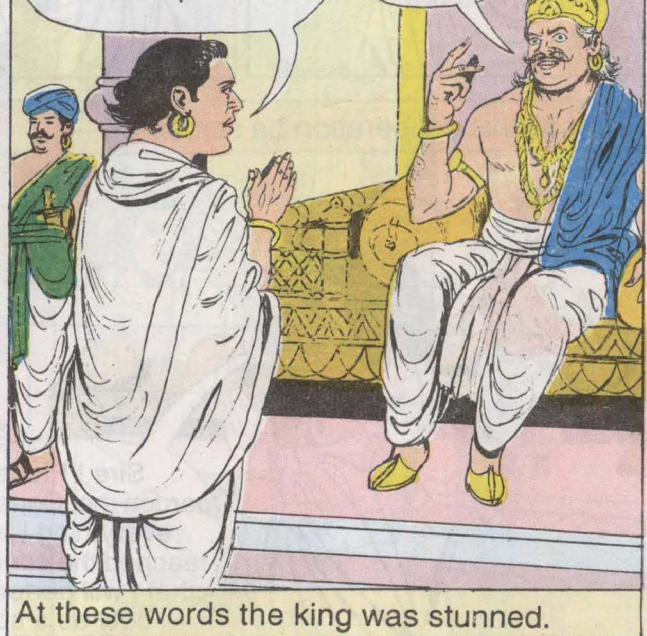
My father wished, "Son! You should become greater than me!" Therefore I want to comply to his wish.

I am sure an able son like you will excel his father.



Sire! I can never surpass him in politics. The path of my greatness is to renounce the world and accept ascetic discipline.

WHAT?



At these words the king was stunned.

The whole assembly looked at Sthulabhadra with surprise

What do you mean ? Ascetic discipline ! Renunciation !

Yes, sire ! I have decided. I have understood the reality of this world. Now I will be my own master. I will renounce the world and get initiated.

Some courtiers whispered—

You will see that on the pretext of initiation he will return to Kosha. Such pleasure seeker and lustful man and ascetic ? Never ?

The king also did not believe. He said—

Son ! Grief naturally inspires such sentiments. Please give a serious thought. You are fated to be the prime-minister not an ascetic.

Sire ! I am firm on my decision. I will be a disciple of Arya Sambhuti Vijaya.

Brother ! What is this ? Please don't do this. Don't abandon us.

Sthulabhadra took leave of everyone and left for the forest alone. People kept on whispering—

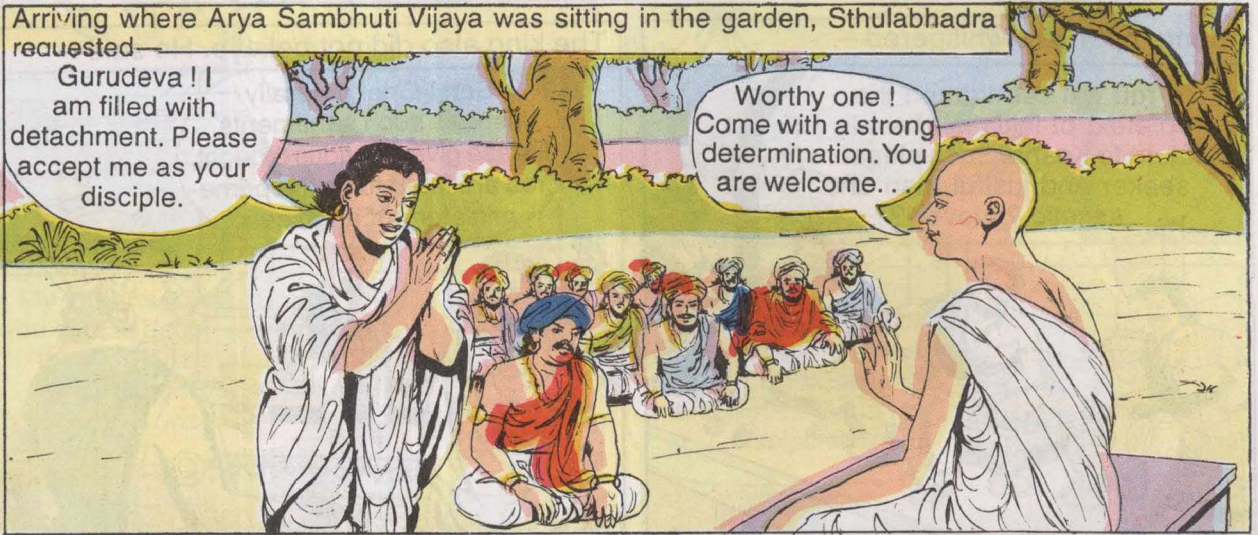
See, he will wander around and return. At last he will turn towards the mansion of Kosha.



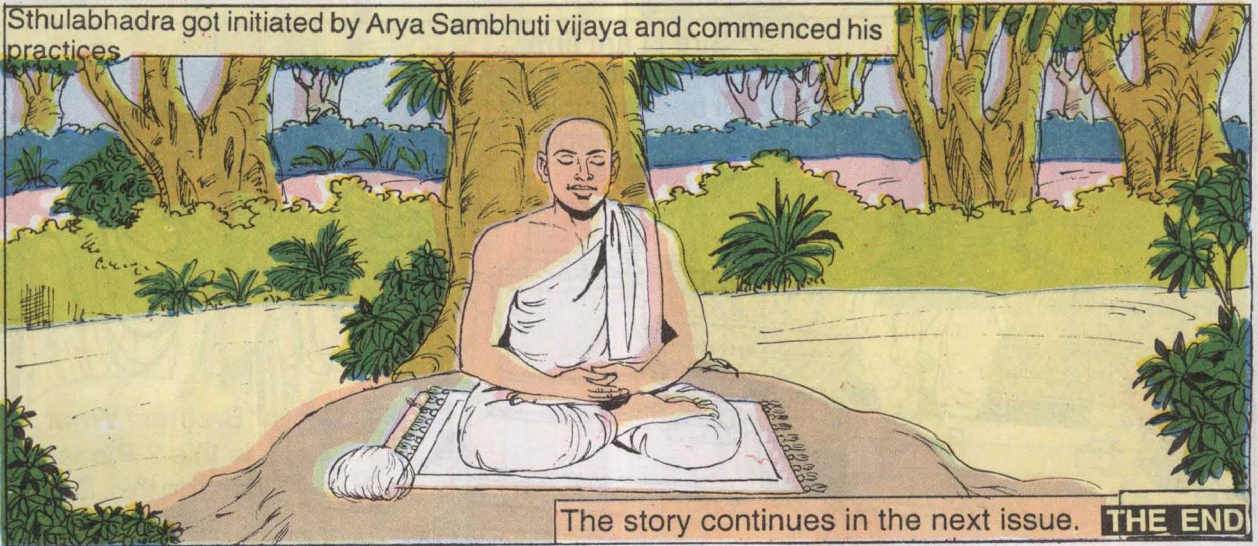
Arriving where Arya Sambhuti Vijaya was sitting in the garden, Sthulabhadra requested—

Gurudeva ! I am filled with detachment. Please accept me as your disciple.

Worthy one ! Come with a strong determination. You are welcome. .



Sthulabhadra got initiated by Arya Sambhuti vijaya and commenced his practices



The story continues in the next issue. **THE END**

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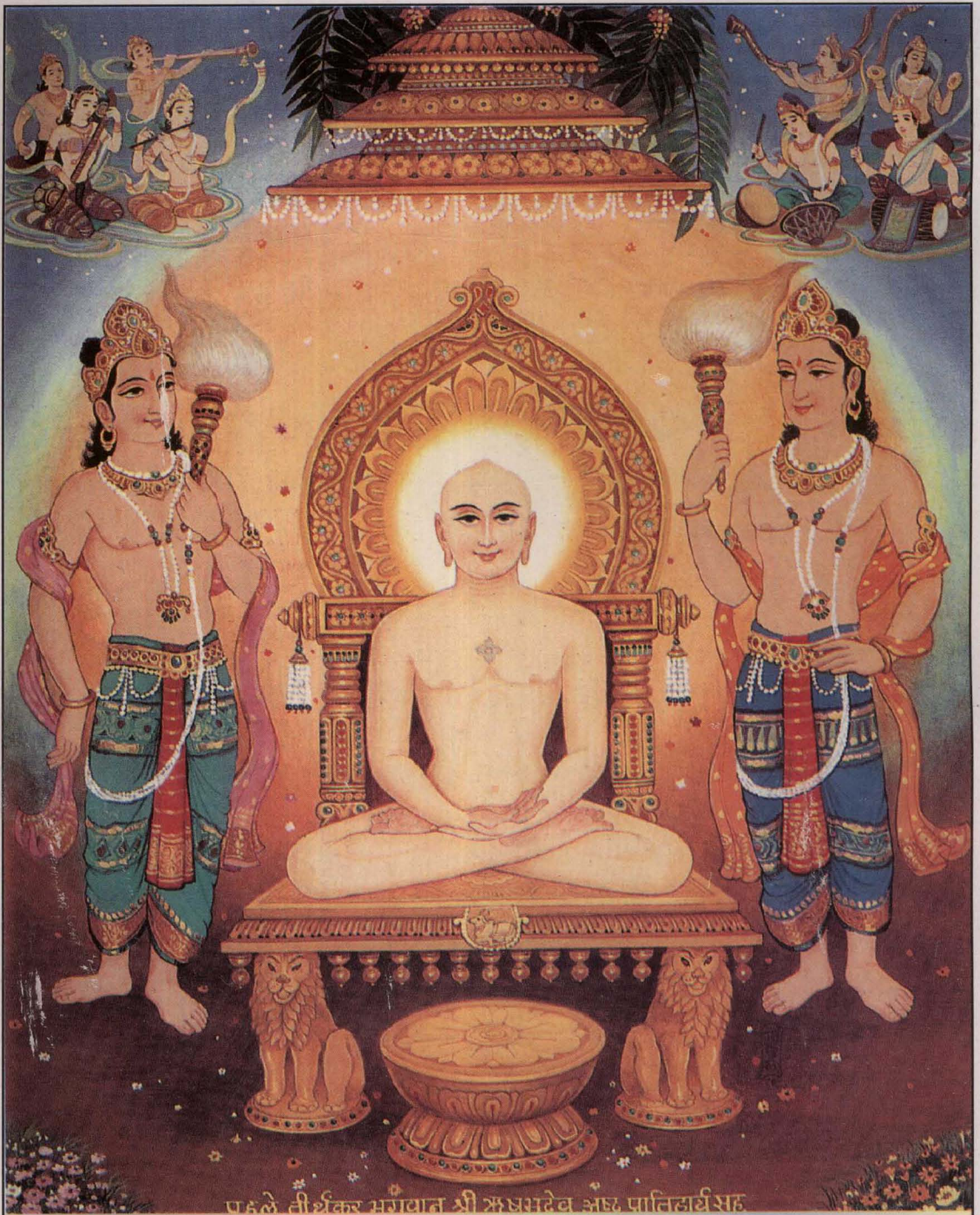
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